The Nation.

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PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE

Rethinking the Left: Invitation to An Inquiry

MARCUS G. RASKIN
MARY KALDOR
ARYEH NEIER
GAR ALPEROVITZ

"It is time for a wide-ranging dialogue on the left . . ." (Page 512)

EDITORIAL

THE NEW CIVIL RIGHTS

The civil rights rebellion ended more than a quarter of a century ago with the recognition—in law and in the social consensus—that black people should have equal access to the institutions of public life: schools, electoral politics, general accommodations. Legislatures put their seals on those rights after an extraordinary period of violence, protest and political struggle at the very roots of society. No mass movement has followed to further the cause.

The "civil rights restoration" bill, which Congress passed and President Bush vetoed last year, a variant of which is up for consideration again, is mostly marginal to the uncoordinated campaigns for minority empowerment and economic reapportionment that lead the historic engagement of blacks with white America today. The fact that even such a minor act cannot pass shows how powerful racism remains in the national life—despite the denials of hard-core white supremacists and their black neocon allies.

Nothing much will be done to reverse the disastrous consequences of racism—the collapse of the cities, the intractable hold of crime, the grip of despair—without a new political mobilization that can demand redress. Today's "civil rights" struggles are about health care, education, progressive taxation, public enterprise. That's a bigger order of business than either party in Washington will acknowledge. As a veteran of the earlier struggle says in Fred Powledge's very solid history of the civil rights movement, *Free at Last?*: "I wish to God people would get a-moving again."

THE RYSKAMP NOMINATION
HERMAN SCHWARTZ

OCTOBER SURPRISE REVISITED
CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

WOMEN AND THE WELFARE STATE
EILEEN BORIS

THE BLACK MIGRATION
MAUD LAVIN

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LETTERS.

CHEMICAL RETRACTION

Wilmington, Del.

R. Dennis Hayes's February 4 article on the O'Harren lawsuit, "Hidden Health Hazards of CFCs," misrepresents the outcome of the O'Harren case and grossly distorts the facts regarding the safety of CFC-113. Further, the article unfairly attempts to discredit the outstanding reputation of Haskell Laboratories, one of the most respected toxicology laboratories in the world.

Hayes repeatedly refers to the O'Harren case but fails to report that no judgment was ever entered against Du Pont by the court. Several parties, including Du Pont and O'Harren himself, agreed to settle the case prior to entry of judgment to avoid further litigation costs. In reference to Hayes's allegation that Du Pont concealed information, the jury specifically found that Du Pont and Allied-Signal did not conspire to conceal any findings with respect to the two-year toxicology study. In fact we have consistently distributed the most updated safety and handling information on CFCs to our customers.

CFC-113, and all CFCs, are among the least toxic chemicals known. They have been in existence for sixty years, providing essential societal needs for safe refrigeration, energy-efficient insulating foams and precision cleaning solvents. Based on our studies, CFC-113, when used within its assigned threshold limit value, has no carcinogenic, mutagenic or teratogenic effects. Hayes has completely misinterpreted the data.

Du Pont's leadership efforts on CFC phaseout and alternatives development have been recognized by the E.P.A. through the agency's presentation to Du Pont of a 1990 Stratospheric Ozone Protection Award. Our public positions and product information are provided to customers, schools, state and federal legislators and regulators, media and all consumers who request them.

Hayes's article is factually incorrect, irresponsible and misleading. We request that a retraction be issued. *Joseph P. Glas*
vice president, Du Pont

HAYES REPLIES

San Francisco

My article never said that a court entered a judgment against Du Pont. As I stated, the jury found against Du Pont. *After* the jury delivered its verdict, Du Pont chose to settle out of court. Du Pont thereby avoided the publicity and precedent of a "judgment," and no doubt did so to reduce its considerable legal exposure. Effective September 1990, the California Criminal Liability Act declares corporate officers and managers such as Joseph Glas subject to criminal convictions with jail terms and their corporations subject to fines of up to $1 million for failure to warn workers and to notify regulatory agencies of known product and workplace dangers. The law applies to "any person who sells a hazardous substance to any employer in this state." The jury specifically found that Du Pont failed to provide adequate warning and instructions for the CFC-113 to which O'Harren was exposed and that it was Du Pont's failure to do so that caused O'Harren's injury. Needless to say, that finding clashes sharply with Glas's claim that Du Pont has "consistently distributed the most updated safety and handling information on CFCs."

Nor did I state that a jury found a conspiracy to conceal information. I did explain at some length how Du Pont concealed and obscured data indicating that CFC-113 was dangerous, and fatal to laboratory rats as well as workers. The jury's finding was the result of a conspiracy of record: Du Pont lawyers succeeded in excluding from deliberation the question of whether Du Pont failed to warn workers *as a class*. Instead, the jury was asked a question that was heavily edited by Du Pont's legal staff: Did Du Pont intentionally conceal information from O'Harren personally? To this narrowly construed question the jury replied no.

Du Pont is still trying to hide the laboratory rat study. In a letter to O'Harren's attorney dated the day before Glas wrote to *The Nation*, lawyers for Du Pont described the rat study as "proprietary," even though I located the 1,666-page study in the Environmental Protection Agency's toxic substances database. The study is part of a much larger, unreleased dossier on CFC-113 toxicity. Will Glas now agree to release all the toxicity data for review by epidemiologists and public health practitioners not in the pay of chemical companies or dependent on the industry's research grants? Will Du Pont also release all the data from its current HCFC and HFC toxicity testing?

Glas claims that CFCs "are among the least toxic chemicals known." How then does he explain the special warnings on CFC-113 exposure issued by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, the Navy and the Michigan Department of Health? (The federal government's warning is titled *NIOSH Alert: Request for Assistance in Preventing Death from Excessive Exposure to CFC-113*.) These warnings came too late for the workers and service personnel whose exposure to CFC-113 proved instantly fatal.

Throughout the 1980s, Du Pont produced CFCs of every description even though we have known since the 1970s that CFCs shred our planet's delicate radiation shield. Now Du Pont is pushing hard to replace CFCs with chemicals that will continue to shred the ozone well into the twenty-first century. As for the E.P.A., the selection of Du Pont for the Stratospheric Ozone Protection Award in 1990 bears comparison with the selection of secret war architect Henry Kissinger for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1973. I stand by my story.
R. Dennis Hayes

CONFUSED

New York City

In the March 4 *Nation* Alexander Cockburn wrote that when the ground war started no one should be surprised if Iraq's underrated, more experienced and hardened army defeated the allied forces. He was specifically referring to the regulars, not the Republican Guard. Following the ground war, you stated editorially that the self-same Iraq was a "small, underdeveloped Third World country with an untrained and unprotected army of conscripts with second-rate versions of mediocre weapons." Please advise. *Jules Feiffer*

TRUMPETING OF THE RAMS

New York City

Stuart Klawans's review of *The Silence of the Lambs* ["Films," Feb. 25] contends that Jonathan Demme leaves open the possibility that the protagonist may be a lesbian. And why? Because (1) she has a close friend who is a woman, and (2) she doesn't fall in love with a man. Are buddy movies homosexual? I know it's startling that there is at last a mainstream movie where a woman's focus is on her work and not her man; perhaps Klawans just can't get used to it. It's the old scenario: The guy in the bar makes a pass at a woman who does not respond in kind and he therefore concludes, She must be gay. Sorry Demme hurt your ego. Go to any other movie and you'll feel a lot better. *Annie Lazar*

KLAWANS REPLIES

New York City

So now, for Navaskian wages, I not only write movie reviews but also teach remedial reading. "Leaves open the possibility" does not mean you *must* see the character as lesbian but that you may if you like. A lot of women have chosen to do just that and have thanked Demme for giving them the option. In reply to the other questions: Yes, buddy movies do involve an element of homoeroticism, if they're any good, and no, I do not entertain fantasies of dating Jodie Foster. That was John Hinckley. I remain faithful to Paulette Goddard.
Stuart Klawans

YELLOW RIBBONISM

Fairfield, Conn.

Margot Kidder's letter to her mom verifies that the McCarthy mentality has surfaced again ["Confessions of Baghdad Betty," March 4]. I have never seen such antagonism toward those who are exercising their right of free speech. Kidder is not the only one who is suffering. A businessman told me he was afraid not to sell pro-war items such as flags and bumper stickers for fear of his store being trashed. *Marcia Miner*

The Nation welcomes letters—typed, double spaced and no longer than 300 words, please.

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EDITORIALS.

Cruel Choices

Within days of the rout of Iraq, it was clear that the people of that suffering nation, roused to rebellion by the U.S. war effort, were to be sacrificed on the altar of postwar expediency. Since Gen. Norman Schwarzkopf's indiscreet conversation with David Frost, in which he second-guessed the timing of the cease-fire, the editorial pages have seethed with debate about the fate of those whose inconvenient struggle against Saddam Hussein has risked, in the words of one particularly cynical U.S. official, "spoiling the victory."

Conservatives argue that the "moral" (and thus the intrinsically American) thing to do is to send in the troops to support the rebellion. Realists, experienced in the twilight nuances of foreign policy, agree with Bush that the only sensible way to advance U.S. interests is to stand aloof, anguishing though this may be to our sense of virtue. This intellectual contest can be seen in all its clarity in the spats between the editorial writers of *The New York Times* and columnists like A.M. Rosenthal and William Safire, which closely mirror the arguments over bombing Iraq in the first place. The new debate, begun three weeks too late to make any practical difference, poses the customary question: Which side are you on? Or in grubbier terms, Which is the lesser evil?

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Which side are we on then? Neither, because, as Heine said, *alle beide stinken*. So, a plague on both. And the more so because both preserve the shameless myth of American innocence in this latest Middle East debacle. The pundit class—with the honorable exception of the *Times*'s Anthony Lewis, who has reversed his earlier belief that it was a just war—refuses to acknowledge that this was the war it wanted, and these are its consequences: the "near-apocalyptic" destruction of Iraq, in the U.N.'s words, and the removal of any palatable alternatives for its future.

This is not the first time we have been presented with such a false choice. Choosing between two evils is the basic deal that national security establishments, East and West, have forced on us time after time since World War II. Was it not logical to prefer the stability of the cold war to the annihilation of a hot one? To coddle Saddam Hussein in preference to the greater demons in Teheran?

Nor will it be the last time. A renewed round of arms sales to the Middle East—incredibly, the Bush Administration's only tangible policy initiative since the war—promises more of the same. What choices will we be offered when the time comes to confront the hostile fundamentalists who may one day lay hold of the arsenals of Egypt and Saudi Arabia, not to mention Hafez al-Assad of Syria, who is likely to abandon his present role as "our son of a bitch" rather sooner.

If we say no to these choices, the charge will be made, of course, that we are rejectionists, that we make a cult of our marginality because it absolves us of the "hard choices" that the "real world" requires. Let us by all means base our thinking on the world as it is, not as we would dream it to be. But that is not the same thing as acquiescing in an evil, even a lesser one, that could have been avoided in the first place and that will only keep the world locked in the same vicious circles. A politics based on the choice of lesser evils can never be the basis for a moral alternative.

And alternatives are available, even if they currently feel remote. In the case of Iraq, resurrecting the dead is beyond our power. But it is never too late to work to prevent further damage: That means massive humanitarian aid to the Kurdish refugees. It means pushing the U.N. beyond the limits of the cease-fire text of the Security Council, whose narrow reading of the refusal to intervene in a country's internal affairs becomes absurd in the case of Iraq. In time it should even mean a reformed U.N., less prey to the abuse of U.S. power that has lately so tarnished an honorable institution.

Judging Judges

The Senate Judiciary Committee is about to bite a most unpalatable bullet—voting on a controversial lower court nomination. As his part in Ronald Reagan's campaign to point the federal judiciary sharply rightward, George Bush has nominated Florida U.S. District Judge Kenneth Ryskamp to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit, one of just three circuits not dominated by conservatives.

Ryskamp is a particularly nasty problem for many on the committee. A wealthy white male Protestant, like almost all Reagan-Bush nominees, he has not shown himself to be overtly racist or manifestly incompetent, the two most comfortable grounds for rejecting a nominee. Ryskamp did, however, remain a member for twenty-three years of a Florida country club that is notorious for excluding blacks and Jews, resigning only a week before his nomination hearing after his supporters told him he would lose if he didn't [see David Corn, "Beltway Bandits," April 15]. And in a police brutality suit brought by several blacks as a result of an incident in which police dogs mauled a 15-year-old boy and tore the testicles of another, Ryskamp not only set aside the jury verdict against the city and the police chief (the Court of Appeals later reversed him) but told the plaintiffs, some of whom had never even been charged with a crime, "I think of countries where if you are guilty of a robbery, they cut off your hand as a vivid reminder that this is forbidden. It might not be inappropriate to carry around a few scars to remind you of your wrongdoing in the past, assuming the person has done wrong, and of course in two of these cases the parties came in and admitted they were there to steal."

The appellate reversal in this case is one of many in Ryskamp's civil rights rulings. Again and again the Court of Appeals has criticized him for going outside the record to find grounds to set aside jury verdicts for civil rights plaintiffs or to dig up data or legal arguments to use against them that even the defense counsel hadn't raised. Just a few weeks ago, for example, the appellate court overturned Ryskamp's dismissal of a black police officer's claim that he had been fired on racial grounds. In another case, he set aside a jury verdict in favor of an Egyptian doctor who claimed to have been wrongly discharged. The appellate court reversed him for "ignor[ing] the standard" governing a trial judge's authority to overturn a jury verdict (a standard that is usually second nature to judges) and substituting his own view of the evidence. And there have been many similar cases.

If the Senate were willing to play the equal role in the nomination process that the Constitution assigns it, someone like Ryskamp—and indeed many of the Administration's nominees—would never be sent up. The Constitution divides the power to appoint the judiciary between the executive and legislative branches, and when the two are controlled by different parties, it might be expected that the Senate would not shy away from exercising its constitutional prerogative. It frequently exercises this power with Supreme Court nominations and administrative appointments, where one would expect the President to have more leeway than with appointments to the independent third branch. It is, after all, his Administration, and the appointments are usually for a few years rather than for life. William Bradford Reynolds and William Lucas, for example, were denied posts in the Justice Department because of their records and views, and that is not uncommon.

With judgeships, however, except for Supreme Court appointments and the occasional nominee, like Jefferson Sessions or Dan Manion, whose racism or obvious lack of qualifications enables citizens' groups to force the Senate to scrutinize them carefully, nominees get virtually a free ride. Two years into his

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presidency, Bush has appointed seventy federal judges without a fight, even though they fit the Reaganite mold so well that conservatives are jubilant. "There is no area in which conservatives are more happy with George Bush than in judicial nominations," crowed one; another called Bush's nominees "as good as or better on the whole than Ronald Reagan's."

The reason for this abdication of power and responsibility by politicians who are not usually so self-effacing is not hard to find: With the exception of a Supreme Court candidate or an obviously impossible lower court nominee, there is no political gain in a messy judgeship fight. Presidents make no bones about their intention to appoint judges on ideological grounds, but Democratic and liberal senators find it unseemly to oppose judicial nominees for failing to be sufficiently dedicated to civil rights and other liberal values. Conservatives such as Orrin Hatch, Strom Thurmond and Alan Simpson, however, didn't hesitate to oppose liberal Carter nominees, like Abner Mikva, Patricia Wald and Stephen Reinhardt, and even such insufficiently pure Reagan nominees as Andrew Frey and Judith Whittaker.

The consequences of the committee's default in opposing the Reagan-Bush judicial strategy are paradoxical. The battleground of the future will be legislative, not constitutional; this Supreme Court is not likely to expand constitutional rights, and at least some of its more reactionary decisions will be countered by legislation. Democratic and liberal senators seem willing to take on a popular President to fight for those bills. But laws written to help poor people, minorities, women, working people and others will be interpreted and applied by judges who can—and have—undercut them. Those hard-won laws will do little good if judges interpret them the way Antonin Scalia, Kenneth Ryskamp and the other Reagan-Bush judges have. Unfortunately, it is not likely that the Senate Judiciary Committee will be troubled by this paradox.

HERMAN SCHWARTZ

Herman Schwartz is author of Packing the Courts: The Conservative Campaign to Rewrite the Constitution *(Scribner's).*

Lethal Injections

"I have not . . . been able to convince myself that there is really any imminent danger." These words are spoken by the Mayor in Henrik Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People* to his brother, Dr. Thomas Stockman. The Mayor ignores the medical evidence that his city's health spa is using polluted water that will bring disease and death instead of tourists. Rather than face political and financial ruin, he denies the health threat and casts his brother as the real threat to the city's welfare.

New York City's ravaged health care community can easily imagine Mayor Dinkins speaking the same words when confronted with evidence of the city's escalating AIDS crisis among intravenous drug users [see Gay Wachman, "Letters," April 15]. Needle sharing is the most efficient means of transmitting HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. At least 60 percent of New York's estimated 250,000 I.V. drug users are thought to be infected with the virus. Some 1,000 women in New York City have contracted the virus from men who inject drugs. AIDS is now the leading cause of death among women between the ages of 25 and 34, and of children between 1 and 4.

New York is one of eleven states in which possession of a syringe without a prescription is a crime. Courageously defying this ban, the New York chapter of ACT UP has operated a needle exchange program for the past fourteen months. But this pioneering effort cannot possibly reach all New York's I.V. drug users, so most are left to find expensive and usually unsterile needles on their own, or to share needles. Legally, the Mayor and Health Commissioner could permit sterile syringes to be sold over the counter or distributed by AIDS-prevention organizations, but they refuse to do so.

In England, Liverpool adopted a needle exchange program and has had no cases of HIV infection from needle sharing or of pediatric AIDS. Programs in Tacoma, Washington; New Haven, Connecticut; Honolulu; Amsterdam; and other cities have had similar results. Yet New York's Mayor, like Ibsen's, ignores the evidence and claims that a needle exchange program will "encourage" or "condone" drug use. He appears unimpressed that not one of the cities with such programs has seen an increase in I.V. drug use. His repeated claim that there is "no evidence" that needle exchange programs reduce the spread of the AIDS virus is at worst a knowing falsehood and at best a paradigm that has outlived its usefulness. If sending the "wrong message" is the concern, what is the message of a policy that favors death by AIDS over drug use? When hepatitis was the most dangerous disease transmitted by needle sharing, pounding the bully pulpit of "morality" might have been defensible. When a moral judgment means that thousands will die, it cannot be allowed.

On April 8, members of the ACT UP Needle Exchange and the National AIDS Brigade go on trial in New York City for syringe possession; a week later the syringe possession trial of two Italian officials also begins in New York. Emma Bonino, a member of the Italian Parliament, and Marco Taradash, a member of the European Parliament, came to New York to declare the city a "global public health menace" and, as a symbolic protest, to present sterile syringes to the Mayor. In May another trial involving ACT UP and the National AIDS Brigade will begin. These trials will focus public attention on this cruel, morally reprehensible policy.

Ibsen's Dr. Stockman refused to be quiet, even though it meant he would endure enmity and abuse and be labeled an enemy of the people. The ignorance, rigidity and moral impoverishment of an irresponsible few speaking in the name of the "war on drugs" must not drown out sane health policy and common sense.

JOHN T. SCHULER AND JONATHAN M.M. SOROKO

John T. Schuler and Jonathan M.M. Soroko write about drug and crime issues. Soroko, one of the attorneys representing Bonino and Taradash, formerly worked for the Office of the New York City Special Narcotics Prosecutor.

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American Dream

Since we won the war, my veins have been alight with the savage alkali of victory, a drug that mysteriously transformed me, making even my body strange to me. Who needed sleep! Yet without sleep, it was hard to have those instructive dreams that might tell me what new creature I had been changed into. Eventually, though, fatigue set in, and I dreamed:

Airplanes

In my dream, I felt that airplanes taking off from a carrier made the most magnificent roar, that airplanes soaring were implacable silvery angels. Genius airplanes! Playful airplanes! Stealthy airplanes that mask themselves! Stout airplanes that drive enemy radar schizophrenic! It was all right to kill people if it was done from such fine airplanes, and it is better to kill people from airplanes than to starve them with sanctions—*for you must break the skin*, you must show how inferior skin is to the metal sheath of an airplane! My buoyant heart told me that one American is worth a thousand Iraqis, those paltry things, for the value of a human life was now measured by how many dead people a man can make from a magnificent airplane! It was wrong for one evil man to control most of the world's oil, but it is all right for one country to have most of the world's airplanes, and it is all right for those airplanes to control most of the world's oil. Blood *doesn't* equal oil, because you can't power an airplane with blood; blood must *mix* with oil and, using secret formulas, blood must go beyond the human and become brilliant airplanes that can make people bleed. (Of course you must have some infantry, too, so the enemy has feet to kiss!) Had I once dreamed we would be connected to all the peoples of the world? But how? A big dance? An orgy? A family with all its minglings of love and hate and blood? Who can even remember *those* fading childish dreams! But if you can't be connected to people by blood, it is good to feel you are at least connected to them because they follow your orders—that you can make them do what you want with your airplanes. There is no problem in the world that cannot be solved by sufficiently smart airplanes. If we had used two hands in Vietnam we would have solved *that* problem. If two hands didn't work, we would have grown more, and used three hands. Like Kali, the Indian goddess of airplanes!

To Be an American Now

O in my sleep I am drunk with it! Who could unriddle the good and the bad of it! I cannot. Even to try feels compromised, soiled, unpatriotic. *So there is no bad to it.* We have no real competitors. The good of the world depends on us. This should now be interpreted as: *Everything we do is good.*

So who am I now that I am still connected to a great power, all of whose actions are good? Am I still human, that unstable mixture of good and evil? But who would want to be still human in this world where I am smarter as a bomb than I am as an individual? Who would want to be mired in contradiction and offal and the need for rest when I can soar freely on my television screen not as an eagle that scavenges for food but as a rocket that eats air, the diamonds of liquid oxygen, a missile that never sleeps and that never fails to hit its target because whatever I hit *is* my target.

The New World Order

And these are the rules of our new democracy: If you haven't walked across a minefield, don't ask questions at press conferences, because if you haven't walked across a minefield there are many things you are unable to understand. If you can't understand then you haven't the right to know. If you haven't the right to know, then you haven't the need to know. What you don't need to know, you don't want to know. But don't worry, *they'll take care of it*. After all: Even with all our airplanes we have enemies, and the world can be a minefield.

I awoke and remembered a time when I was content to have skin instead of a metal sheath, when I had known the mixture of pleasure and pain that is the endlessness of negotiations between equals, the sorrowful joys and anxious risks of democracy. Slow to make decisions, democracy chewed and rechewed before it swallowed. Its citizen soldiers were oxen, hard to lead to war, and so they made unsteady custodians of empire. Democracy was risky, wagering all on the community's decisions, not trusting the secret deliberations of *those who know*. With all its savagery, democracy was sometimes tender toward others' all too mar-able skin, for we lay in one another's hands, and even people now your enemy could only uneasily be treated like a TV image being erased. The metal world calls democracy's endless hesitations and compromises "the Vietnam syndrome." My dream agreed with President Bush: We have put on our metal bodies, we have that "syndrome" behind us. In the daylight I savor our victory, but at night I'm afraid to dream again.

JAY CANTOR

Jay Cantor's most recent book is On Giving Birth to One's Own Mother: Essays on Art and Society *(Knopf).*

★

We've Got The Gun Nuts On The Run

We've got the gun nuts on the run.
Their power has begun to fade
Before the Bradys' brave crusade.
They feel abandoned and betrayed
By pols whose bills they've always paid.
The strain among them has displayed
Some rifts along their barricade.
We've got the gun nuts on the run.

I hope they don't turn and shoot us.

Calvin Trillin

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MINORITY REPORT.

CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

I may scream if I read the words "the owl of Minerva" ever again. Just because Hegel wrote that this canny bird takes wing only at dusk, innumerable pseudohistorians go around screeching that you can't evaluate an epoch until it's well and truly over. I suppose the persistence of the phrase has to do with the fact that you often don't find something out until it's too late. For several years now I have been droning on about the "October surprise" theory—the one that says the Reagan-Bush campaign made a covert deal with the Ayatollah Khomeini in October 1980, whereby the Ayatollah held on to the U.S. diplomatic hostages and thus ruined Jimmy Carter's re-election plan, and whereby he was rewarded for this with sophisticated weaponry [see "Minority Report," June 20, July 4/11, August 1/8, October 24 and November 21 of 1987; September 19, October 3, October 17 and October 31 of 1988; and May 28 of 1990]. The evidence for the hypothesis got steadily better, but one kept hearing "Gary Sick doesn't buy it." That was no small objection: Captain Sick had been the point man on Iran for Carter's National Security Council and had written the best history of the calamity, titled *All Fall Down*. He had continued to monitor the region from his new post at Columbia University, and to supply thoughtful commentary.

Just as Bush's bombs and missiles began to fall on Baghdad, in yet another U.S. change of side in the Iran-Iraq conflict, I had lunch with Gary Sick and heard that he now believed the "October surprise" explanation after all:

> I'm not a conspiracy theorist but I've worked much of my life in the Middle East and have had the chance to hear of a lot of conspiracies. People want to impose order and explanation on the random. Between 1981, when I left the White House, and 1985, when *All Fall Down* came out, I'd heard the "October surprise" story many times, but my book doesn't even mention it.
>
> Then came the Iran/*contra* revelations, on which I did a great deal of research and analysis. The revelations showed that they were capable of some very amazing things. I had been through all of it carefully, so it still took some persuading that I should admit I was wrong, or had missed the real story. I had constructed a very careful alternative rationale and was very comfortable with it. But now I had a lot of new information that I couldn't reject out of hand, so I equivocated. I started saying that it [the "October surprise"] is not impossible.

In 1988, Sick was contacted by Martin Killian of *Der Spiegel* and Robert Parry, then of *Newsweek*, who were working on the theory. The three began to compare notes:

> I became the scorekeeper for the enterprise, entering everything onto one immense database. I started out knowing the least of the three and being the most passively involved. Then I began to be active, and to suggest sources and documents. I guess it was really a slow accretion, but by the time we got to November 1989 I had really become convinced that this *had* happened and that I could say straightforwardly that the weight of the evidence had persuaded me.

Sick's training is that of the empirical, establishment analyst, weeding out unwarranted or unsafe assumptions and faulty items of information. As he puts it:

> If a story or theory isn't true, and you're really collecting serious evidence, you start to get anomalies. And you back away. The amazing thing about this story was that as new bits and pieces came in—from the most disparate sources; marginal countries and unrelated individuals—the stories were not all identical *but* they contained no contradiction. All the clouds of information had a single, central core, which reinforced rather than contradicted itself. People who hadn't met, or who had met and who hated one another, were essentially telling the same tale. And it started to explain things that I hadn't understood before.
>
> From my old job I knew a lot of U.S. government people and intelligence types. And when I asked for help in checking something, then very obscure little pieces of information which not more than half a dozen government types could have known—and had often forgotten—*always fit*.

Under the telling title "The Election Held Hostage," on April 16 the PBS program *Frontline* will transmit the case for taking the "October surprise" seriously. Gary Sick both advised the filmmakers and agreed to be interviewed on screen. Watching this highly condensed program, one is reminded:

§ that the Reaganites in 1980 thought only a hostage deal could save Carter's presidency, so they set up special teams to "monitor" his negotiations with Teheran.

§ that meetings took place, in Washington and in Paris, between Reagan-Bush high-ups and Iranian envoys.

§ that the whereabouts of George Bush, William Casey and their cronies at the time of some of those meetings still cannot be verified.

§ that as early as February 1981, when there were no American hostages in Teheran or Beirut, the shipment of American weapons to Iran began. The film shows Nicholas Veliotes, then Assistant Secretary of State for the Near East, saying that the "charter flights" conveying such weapons were "cleared from people on high," and Gen. Alexander Haig saying that the Administration "winked" at them. This point alone, apart from destroying the accepted cover-up rationale of the later Iran/*contra* shipments, raises the inescapable question: For what quid was this very early arms deal a quo?

Watch the *Frontline* show whatever you do. And allow yourself the reflection that Iran in 1980 was in the weapons market because, having overthrown the Shah, it was subject to a boycott and, having just been invaded by Iraq, it was in need. Add to this the reflection that Saddam's invasion of Iran in 1980 was not considered a Hitlerite crime against international law; it was indeed viewed sympathetically by the Reagan-Bush regime for the best part of eight years. Notice how Iran is the victor in the latest round. See how the "balance of power" has been, and is being, kept. Brood, if you will, Was it worth a stolen election to bring about this happy result? *Whoosh*, go the wings—with beak and talons to follow.

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ARTICLES.

RETHINKING THE LEFT

The Road to Reconstruction

The march of recent events, from the collapse of the Soviet bloc and the upheavals within the Eastern European nations and the Soviet Union itself to the gulf war, has provoked introspection and debate on the left. Against this backdrop two members of The Nation*'s editorial board, Marcus Raskin and the late A.W. Singham, proposed opening the magazine to an ongoing discussion of the future of the left. As Raskin writes, "It is time for a wide-ranging dialogue on the left and liberal side of the spectrum. Where we have been wrong we must so state. Where we are in need of rethinking, let us rethink, and where we have been right, morally and politically, let us say so forcefully. We are in need of something more than co-optable reforms, something less open to distortion and more life-affirming than revolution. We are in need of reconstruction and institutional transformation."*

The special section that follows, edited by Raskin and Singham (until his untimely death last month), launches this dialogue. In the lead article Raskin provides a historical overview of the clash between the philosophical values of right and left. Mary Kaldor points to a third way in Europe, between post-cold war triumphalism and realism. Aryeh Neier urges the need for principle above politics in the matter of human rights. And Gar Alperovitz proposes community-based socialism to lead us out of the wilderness of oversold free enterprise and discredited statist socialism. —*The Editors*

MARCUS G. RASKIN

We are witnessing the collapse of state socialism and the American governing elite's calculated attempt at enforcing a Pax Americana in the Persian Gulf. While the right rejoices, the left seems benumbed by events, unable to pierce the iron walls of big-business capitalism and the national security state. Together they form an integrated colossus that controls and guides public policy against society; together they have forged a rightist ideology that masks the decay of our nation at the same moment that state socialism, Eastern European style, has toppled.

The fall of deformed state socialism in Eastern Europe is a warning to modern governments, of whatever ideological stripe, that do not meet the needs of their people. It is not, as the right gleefully proclaims, proof that big-business capitalism in partnership with the national security apparatus can provide the answers to the world's, much less our own, problems.

The character of the internal American crisis shows how hollow the right's view is. The Reagan-Bush brand of governing has given us a recession and bloated defense budgets; has consigned tens of millions to poverty; has promoted the idea that democracy means exclusivity rather than inclusivity; and has used war in Panama and the gulf as a way of diverting attention from the anxiety, insecurity and despair of everyday American life. The right has consistently sabotaged participation, deliberation and discourse for our citizenry, claiming that these necessary attributes of modern democracy should be restricted to the few. Indeed, the right's definition of democracy is ersatz stability, the oligarchic control of the strong over the weak.

For Bush, the rightist ideology tells the world, "What we say goes." His "new world order" yokes bellicosity, military high-tech and ideological triumphalism to our own brand of circus. The United States has become the great workshop for the commercial production of escapist dreams and nightmares, which it sells to the world in the form of spectator entertainment. Burdened by paying for imperial illusion, our political leaders pick the pockets of the citizenry as public services decline, the next generation is sacrificed to militarism and the social glue that keeps democracy together becomes unstuck. For the right, democracy is neither a process nor an end. It is not meant to allow labor, minorities and women full economic, political and social citizenship. Instead, democracy is meant to be a set of frozen and constricted procedures to exclude and penalize.

The left has also had its problems with authoritarianism and exclusion. At the beginning of the twentieth century, socialists such as Luxemburg, Goldman, Hilferding and Pannekoek understood the inherent flaws of capitalism and predicted, with lesser or greater accuracy, the dangers that could emerge from capitalist imperialism. But they also feared, as did many others, the logic and consequences of state socialism. "If the present situation continues," Kropotkin wrote Lenin in 1920, "the very word 'socialist' will turn into a curse." He understood that without a recognition of the innate dignity of all human beings there could be no socialism, that socialism in its variant forms stemmed from an existential need to escape misery and exploitation under capitalism. In order to work, this view of socialism, best reflected in Martin Buber's writings, had to be contingent on mutual respect and aid—dare I say empathy?

The Soviet model did not accept this view of socialism. It emphasized military expenditure over consumer spending. In part because of war and cold war, it followed a model of development that emphasized heavy industry over light; it put its faith in pharaonic projects that did not sufficiently improve the people's standard of living. It forced collectivization in areas of life that by their nature were more suited to small-scale, individualistic production, such as agriculture, and it replaced thinking and criticism in politics with command and coercion. Decayed social systems continue only as long as silenced people allow them to last. When the Eastern Europeans found their voices individually and as a group, state socialism creaked to its ignoble end. And the left can be thankful.

In all this tragic history, the right has been content to forget that the Soviet Union has always been eager to cut deals with the West. Indeed, the cold war could have ended virtually

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at its beginning with profit to the West. Germany could have been reunited in the early 1950s, the 1955 Austria state treaty could have been extended to disengagement of the Soviet Union from Eastern Europe, the 1956 Stassen-Zorin agreement could have resulted in military disengagement from Europe and the arms race could have been stopped in the late 1950s, leading to general disarmament. It was the left that suffered grievously at the hands of Leninist-Stalinism, the true name of Marxism-Leninism. This ideological formulation was the modern version of Platonism, in which the guardian elite dares to speak for history and the future. Whether in Mao's peasant-based Communist Party, Deng's capitalist-road Communist Party or Brezhnev's bureaucratic Communist Party, this modern elite of know-it-alls sought to destroy those who argued that the people were capable of self-rule without the guiding iron hand of the party. In the twentieth century, too often revolutionary force became a synonym for justice, and law was alchemized into order, with the result that the socialists who inherited prerevolutionary authoritarian state structures used them to enforce the bureaucratic assumption that what is not authorized is criminal or at least illegal. The people of Eastern Europe suffered, and they were constantly angry. When the people used their own voices, they found that neither the inflections nor the language of their governors spoke for or to them. How did this deformation happen?

For much of its seventy-plus years, Soviet socialism destroyed its own revolutionaries and thinkers and embraced the apparatchiks who operated mainly to protect their own privilege and power. Sovietism came to be despised because it could not stop lying. The consumer products of the government were daily doses of misrepresentation and misery: a misery induced by a bureaucracy that lied to itself and squelched the criticism that any modern nation needs for its own survival, let alone betterment. It was not until Mikhail Gorbachev that the Soviet government contemplated the abandonment of its most reactionary doctrine: the belief that a better future must be accompanied by the truncheon. This change broke the hammerlock of reaction over socialism, distinguishing it from the right. The right's advocacy of the truncheon, from de Maistre forward, is its signature—violence clothed in the law; masked, structural violence in the form of economic oppression; the violence of wars, whether legally declared or illegally waged, against the wretched.

Tyrants—of whatever ideological stripe, left, right or center—seek to engineer people into social slots, to control their very souls. But their bureaucratic instruments can never completely accomplish this benighted objective. If the right and center understand that people seek stability and that modernism has caused a spiritual void, which the right tries to fill with false patriotism or religious fervor, the left knows that within each of us exists a zone of dissonance that produces the urge for change, the desire for freedom and mutual caring and the need to rekindle thinking; and that these will take us beyond the force and exploitation inherent in barracks socialism, free-market capitalism and the national security state.

For the left, the question has invariably been whether a revolt against oppression can result in a changed consciousness that will generate political actions that create and sustain freedom, self-rule, economic equity, shared dignity and human rights. As Vaclav Havel has discovered in Czechoslovakia, efforts to nourish liberation and self-rule, once those goals are achieved, are fraught with difficulties, for old habits and ideas do not disappear easily. The "best of times, worst of times" period we are living in demands that we transcend procrustean ideologies devised in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The currently unfashionable Karl Marx had it quite right when he wrote, in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, "The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living. And just when they seem engaged in revolutionizing themselves and things, in creating something entirely new . . . they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past."

Unfortunately, in the wake of the collapse of state socialism, many Eastern Europeans are looking to the past for their vision of the future, just as conservatives here hold to the eighteenth-century white, male and propertied version of domination as the basis of the American future. A kind of neoreaction in the East seeks to drown out the more imaginative and humane voices. Because all expression for so long was mediated through the state, the unauthorized, whether good or bad, was not heard. Lacking a vision of an alternative, Eastern Europe could fall back into a future where anti-Semitism, xenophobia, extreme nationalism, ultramontane clericalism, ethnic hatreds and civil conflict are rekindled. In Eastern Europe, pacifists, civil libertarians and leftists hoped for a melding of Eduard Bernstein's ideas of social democracy and cultural liberation and found themselves overwhelmed by the snake oil of laissez-faire capitalism. They are engulfed by Helmut Kohl's version of free-market capitalism and German nationalist revival. Meanwhile, the ministates of the East are at one another's throats, from Serbia and Croatia to Armenia and Azerbaijan.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY J-C SUARÈS

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Now Eastern Europeans are learning the difference between the hype of the free market and its actual operation. The capitalists of the West look for profits in the East. Seeing few because of the environmental disasters there and the threat of a banking collapse in the West, they look elsewhere for investment opportunities.

The ideas and motives of the past are not going to help us solve the world environmental crisis, nor will they help dismantle the war system, nor will they help a world in economic turmoil. It will not be easy to shake off the assumptions of the Enlightenment, socialist and capitalist alike, which taught that human prosperity requires the destruction of nature. Both of those systems have contributed tens of thousands of nuclear weapons and missiles. In the Soviet Union, they are now strewn around the world's largest land mass without adequate controls and with no visible enemy (for now). Should the Soviet Union descend into civil war, the question of who will get those weapons and how they will be used underscores the need for a quantum leap in thinking and acting about the war system. And while the United States has better command and control over its nuclear weapons, it appears to have far less command and control over its national psyche. This presses us into continuous wars of great destruction. It is a moral and political outrage that President Bush ordered a war that resulted in the killing and maiming of more than 100,000 people in a six-week period when negotiations could have achieved far better results.

Why then was the war fought? For the warriors, war in itself was the political aim. From time to time, warriors have to prove their worth. This is not done through deterrence; it is accomplished through fighting. The gulf war was the only sure way to justify spending $300 billion a year on national security at a time when Congress was poised to cut the military budget. For the American people the war was meant as a feel-good, good-versus-evil show that would unite the country; instead of Bismarck's blood and iron Bush gives us blood and lasers. We now hear that Saddam and his military shouldn't be weakened further because it would give too much power to Iran and Syria. We hear the "educated" purveyors of myths saying that we are spreading democracy in the Middle East and that victory over the tyrant Saddam Hussein has given the United States power to set the terms of a settlement for all Middle Eastern nations, including Israel. The national security planners tell us that the war has guaranteed cheap oil for the United States, put all Third World upstarts in their place and insured that, no matter how deeply we go into debt to other nations, our control over Middle Eastern oil means that our energy-dependent creditors will have to support our profligate ways.

Just as wars, cold or hot, change the political maps of the world, so they blow away the ideologies that created and were created by those maps. So it is with bureaucratic socialism, and so it can be with exploitative capitalism and the national security state. For all the dangers and imponderables, the left can be deeply thankful at the collapse of barracks socialism. Its demise has ended illusions about revolutions, state power and coercive planning, just as the realities of everyday life in the United States are ending illusions about the efficiency, humaneness and rationality of our own economic system and the national security state.

No future course carries its own guarantee of success. But what is clear is that an alternative course is essential. Indeed, the emergence of a new world political order has been a major theme of the twentieth century: namely, an end to domination of white over nonwhite, humanity over nature and rich over poor. As we continue to work out the projects, social inventions and ideas for reconstruction, we must not forget the core of values that defines a political and moral program. It is one that comes from constant and critical discourse and examination. It recognizes that force is a problematic element of history that must be tamed and channeled. It recognizes that the struggles that have been undertaken over the course of the twentieth century against apartheid and racism and for equality, against exploitation of nature and for protection of the environment, against exclusivity and for inclusivity in politics and social institutions, against war and its preparation and for peaceful solutions, against deepening inequalities and for economic justice, against selfishness and for mutual aid have been and are the proper ones. These struggles and others to come will lead us inexorably to a new philosophy and practice of reconstruction. □

COLD WAR EUROPE

Taking the Democratic Way

MARY KALDOR

During the 1980s I had three wishes. I wished for the end of the cold war, for democracy in Eastern Europe and for a disarmament process to begin. I wished for them every time I stirred a Christmas pudding, caught an autumn leaf or shared a chicken wishbone. And all my wishes came true. But just as in the fairy stories, what I got was quite different from what I expected.

Instead of entering an era of peace, harmony and cooperation, we seem to be sliding into an era of chaos, violence and division. The Western military machine thundered away in the Persian Gulf. The economies and environments of Eastern Europe are devastated, and a new "golden curtain" is dropping to protect the rich West from Eastern economic refugees. New nationalist, religious and ethnic fundamentalisms—what Jacques Delors, president of the European Commission, calls "ideologies of exclusion"—are growing everywhere. Bloody civil wars in the Soviet Union seem increasingly likely. Meanwhile, the West is still doing business as usual. Arms cuts have been minor. NATO not only still exists but has expanded to include a united Germany, even though the Warsaw Pact has

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disintegrated. There is no commitment to solving any of the deep-rooted global problems we face. For the most part, the West has not shed its cold war conditioning. Only in Eastern Europe has the cold war ended.

There were two main Western reactions to last year's events in Eastern Europe. Both stem from long-held assumptions about the nature of the cold war, and both have very dangerous consequences. One is the mood of triumphalism and self-congratulation. This was alleged to be a victory for the West, for American as opposed to European values. The West, said Margaret Thatcher, held out a "beacon of freedom" to the peoples of the East. This is the "end of history," said Francis Fukuyama, the victory for the "universal homogeneous state," which combines political freedom and consumerism. Western triumphalism is an expression of the orthodox view of the cold war as an epic struggle between freedom and totalitarianism. The West was identified with freedom and the East with totalitarianism. It was Western military strength that was supposed to have kept totalitarianism at bay. For some thinkers, freedom is inextricably linked to free markets and a neoliberal ideology.

The problem is that the West cannot be equated with freedom. Certainly, Western countries are democratic countries and Eastern Europeans lusted after Western democracy. But the West did little to support struggles for freedom either in the Third World or in Eastern Europe. On the contrary, Western governments supported brutal military dictatorships in the Third World. And the creation in the late 1940s of a West German state and a Western military alliance entailed the abandonment of the peoples of Eastern Europe.

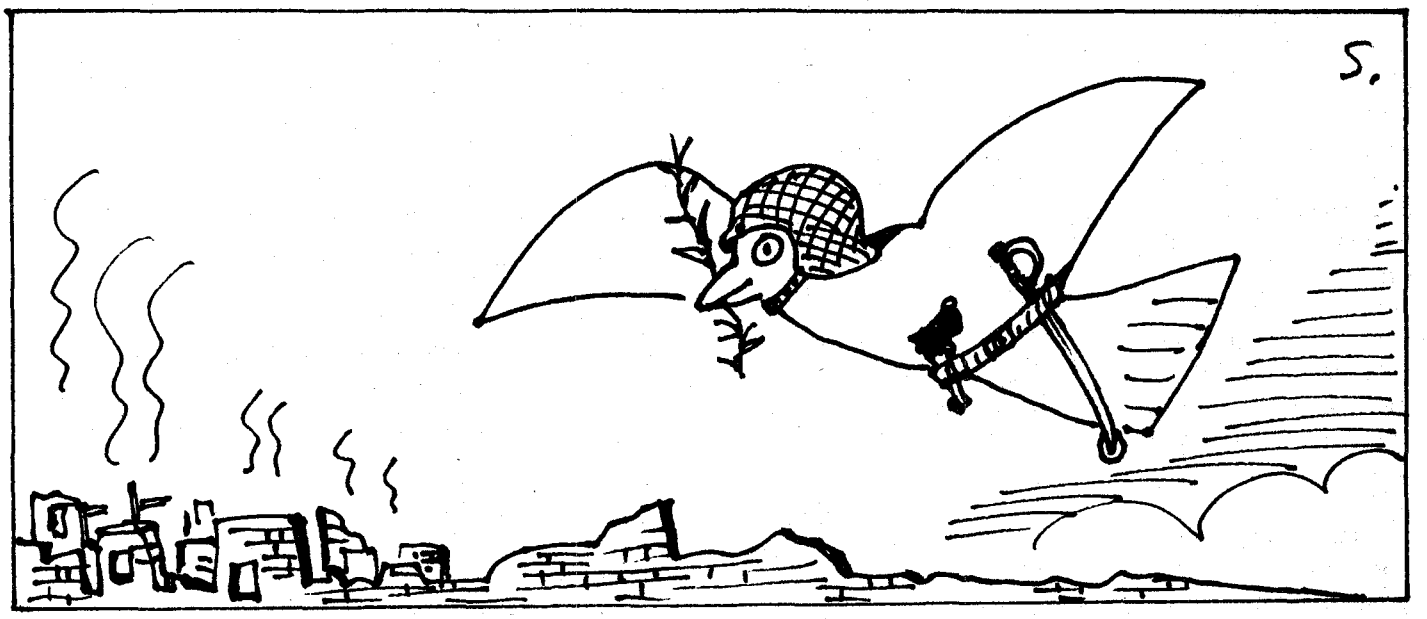
Far from countering a Soviet military threat to Western Europe, NATO legitimized the Soviet presence in Eastern Europe. In the 1970s, during the détente period, there seemed to be a possibility of some evolution toward more open societies in Eastern Europe. Then came the emergence of Solidarity in 1980. The crackdown on Solidarity occurred at the height of the new cold war, in 1981, and was rationalized in terms of aggressive Western postures. The renunciation of the Brezhnev Doctrine triggered the wave of revolutions in Central Europe in 1989. That would have been impossible without the Intermediate Nuclear Forces (I.N.F.) treaty and the new détente mood engendered after 1985 by the arms control process.

The Western triumphalists see little necessity for big reductions in military spending or for increased economic cooperation with Eastern Europe or the Third World. Conservatives argue that if Western military strength brought Communism to its knees, then the same approach can be applied in other parts of the world—to tin-pot dictators actually created by the West. Hence, the gung-ho attitude in the gulf. The struggle between freedom and totalitarianism is being reproduced against fundamentalists, fanatics and dictators in the Third World, those who, in Fukuyama's words, are still in the throes of history.

The orthodox recipe for Eastern European economies is neoliberalism: "Copy us and you can join the West." But of course Eastern Europeans are being urged to adopt policies of structural adjustment that the West would not dream of adopting. Imagine the United States reducing its deficit and external debt through austerity measures such as those imposed on Poland. Imagine if Western Europe had adopted full convertibility and free trade after World War II. Already, real wages in Poland have fallen by more than a quarter. Unemployment, poverty and inequality, as well as environmentally induced diseases, are all increasing.

The danger is that Eastern Europe will join the Third World, not the West. A new West-East division of Europe, along the Oder-Neisse Line, could well parallel the North-South rift in the Americas. A Mexican border could split the continent of Europe. And the Third Worldization of Eastern Europe could give rise to "ideologies of exclusion" and new forms of authoritarianism. It could produce some fanatics and fundamentalists to join the band of new enemies in the Third World.

The second Western reaction to the fall of Eastern European Communism is one of nostalgia. Realists like John Lewis Gaddis or John Mearsheimer regret the passing of the "long peace." They view the cold war as a form of great-power rivalry, and they argue that bipolar structures are much more



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stable than multipolar structures. But this "long peace" was largely confined to northwestern Europe. Eastern Europe was neither peaceful nor stable. There were periodic uprisings (Berlin, 1953; Hungary, 1956; Czechoslovakia, 1968; Poland, 1980-81) that were brutally suppressed. There were wars and revolutions throughout the Third World; indeed, more people have died in wars since 1945 than in the two world wars. There have even been wars in Europe—in Greece and Turkey, and in Northern Ireland.

The realists assumed that nationalism and religious fundamentalism were somehow deep-frozen during the postwar period and would emerge intact when the ice melted. The truth is that these primitive attitudes were nurtured by forty years of totalitarian rule. They were a reaction to a lifetime's experience of lies and oppression. After all, the coalition governments elected after World War II in Central Europe were center-left governments. Without the cold war, those countries might have been as stable as Austria or Finland.

The realists cannot envisage a future without superpowers. Paul Kennedy, author of *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, describes a cyclical process stretching indefinitely into the future. Great powers become powerful through economic strength, but then they find it necessary to spend their wealth on military power. The Soviet Union has collapsed and the United States is declining economically, so goes the argument; now it is the turn of Western Europe and Japan. A new military structure is needed to maintain stability in Europe. In particular, the idea that Western Europe should establish a unified defense community, so that it can join the select club of global policemen, is gaining ground. The proposal for Western European defense integration has acquired considerable impetus during the gulf crisis. Essentially, this is a vision of a world of competing military blocs, in which the rich countries insulate themselves militarily from the "instability" generated by the cold war years.

Both Western reactions presuppose a fundamental conflict between East and West. Both emphasize the role of military strength in defeating totalitarianism (the triumphalists) and keeping the peace (the realists). Both are views from above, addressed to government policy-makers. But another view emerged from the dialogue between parts of the Western European peace movements and Eastern European peace, green and human rights groups during the 1980s. That is the view that there was not a fundamental conflict *between* East and West. Rather, there were fundamental conflicts *within* East and West. The idea of an East-West conflict, the invocation of the "other," was a method by which governments could manage these domestic conflicts.

I use the term "imaginary war" to describe this process. "Deterrence" did not represent preparation for some future war; rather, it was a way of acting out the East-West conflict day after day throughout the postwar period. Through military exercises, the deployment of troops and weapons, the scenarios of military planners, the games of espionage and counterespionage, and the research, development and production of military technology we behaved as though we were in a war situation, as though World War II had never really

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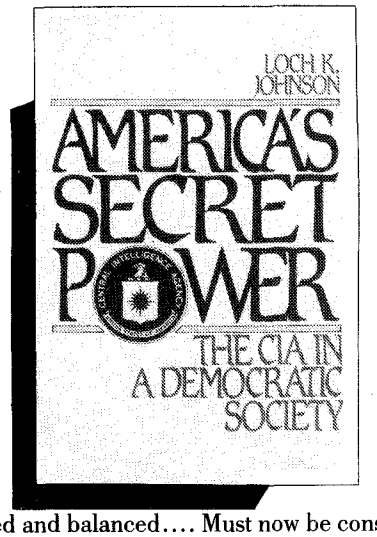

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ended. This imaginary war had profound consequences for the way society was organized in both East and West. There were two distinct systems in East and West: One was democratic and capitalist and the other was socialist and totalitarian. But the two systems were not in conflict. On the contrary, they complemented each other. They shared a need for an imaginary war.

According to this interpretation, the cold war was ended by a wave of popular movements in both East and West that challenged the imaginary-war hypothesis and discredited the cold war idea. It was the Eastern European democracy movements, not Western governments, that brought about the final collapse of Communism. And it was the Western European peace movements that first challenged the status quo in Europe. Some 5 million people demonstrated in the capitals of Western Europe against the new cold war in 1981 and again in 1983.

Perhaps the most important lesson of the 1980s is the role of pressure from below.

It was the pressure of public opinion that led to the zero-option proposal on which the I.N.F. treaty was based. And it was from the Western European peace movement that Gorbachev drew a plethora of ideas and proposals unleashed after 1985. Even more important perhaps was the strategy of "détente from below," which gained importance during the second half of the 1980s. This was the strategy of building links with independent groups in Eastern Europe campaigning for democracy.

"Détente from below" was important in two respects. First, it established the integrity of large parts of the peace movement. It made it impossible to marginalize the peace movement, as had been done in the past, with the charge that peace activists were agents of the Kremlin. Second, it helped to encourage and provide support for the new peace and human rights groups that emerged during the 1980s all over Eastern Europe, groups that played a key role in the revolutions of 1989.

From the perspective of the peace movement, the end of the cold war offered a historic opportunity to reduce reliance on military force and to develop more cooperative forms of international relations, between both East and West, and North and South. What is needed now in Europe is to incorporate Eastern Europe into European institutions and to develop cooperative relationships so that Western Europe does not have to build a new wall. Many people are now talking about the role of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, better known as the Helsinki process. This new European security system would also include all of the Soviet Union and North America and would displace the bloc system and put more emphasis on nonmilitary aspects of security. There is also talk of a Marshall Plan to help clean up the environment of Eastern Europe.

Some of these ideas can be applied to the Third World. Western military strength cannot counter the new enemy—regional dictators, fanatics, terrorists and so on. In the long run, the only way to cope with the Husseins and Qaddafis of the world is through the control of military technology and through real efforts to develop cooperative relationships—to address the social, economic and political conditions that give rise to authoritarianism. But alas, the gulf conflict has put war and militarism back on the agenda. It reinforced the cold war assumption that military strength is the way to cope with totalitarian dictatorships. The Western victory in the gulf could destroy, at least for a time, the hopes held out by the end of the cold war. It will be taken as confirmation that both the triumphalists and the realists are right.

Perhaps the most important lesson of the 1980s is the role of pressure from below. If we are to keep alive a peaceful vision of the post–cold war world, then what is important is to confront the cold war culture—to work for changes in attitudes, new forms of self-organization, the development of democratic relationships. One of the key concepts of the democratic movements was the rediscovery of civil society—the notion that change comes about through the development of autonomous citizens' groups, movements or initiatives that can articulate public discontent, organize social activities and negotiate with governments.

Liberal Western commentators have interpreted the current emphasis on civil society in Eastern and Central Europe as the traditional eighteenth-century concept of civil society, as opposed to anarchic society; of democratic relationships replacing relations of violence. Writers like Ralf Dahrendorf and Timothy Garton Ash have suggested that there were no new ideas in the revolution of 1989. Yet, as articulated by Adam Michnik, George Konrad and Vaclav Havel, the concept of civil society suggests an entirely new form of politics appropriate to confront both the repression and bureaucracy of the single-party state and the electoral machinery of modern Western parties. They emphasize strengthening autonomous, self-organized civic institutions rather than capturing state power; changing the relationship between state and civil society; and, above all, generating an informed debate among those who are not seeking power, who are not watching polls or manipulating public opinion through slogans and advertising. All this has had considerable resonance in Western Europe. Havel has talked about the need to "make a real political force out of a phenomenon so ridiculed by the technicians of power—the phenomenon of the human conscience."

The Helsinki Citizens Assembly, founded in Prague in October 1990, is intended to institutionalize this idea, to provide the kernel of an all-European civil society. The assembly, which was opened by Havel, attracted some 900 people from all over Europe and North America, representing a wide range of citizens' groups and civic institutions. For the first time, Lithuanians and Azerbaijanis, Scots and Welsh, Canadians and Americans, Germans from both East and West, not to mention Scandinavians and Italians, sat down together to discuss one another's experiences and plan future projects. They

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agreed to set up a working group to study economic alternatives to neoliberalism, to create a Forum for Reconciliation to find ways of solving national issues in a peaceful way, to plan campaigns for disarmament and for the democratization of European institutions, and to build a range of networks on nuclear energy, arms conversion, women's issues, etc., in Europe and North America. The aim is to avoid a new cold war between a rich consumerist and armed West and the fundamentalists and fanatics of East and South—to seek a democratic alternative to both. □

HUMAN RIGHTS AND POLITICS

A Matter of Principle

ARYEH NEIER

In principle, concern with human rights has no politics. Indeed, it could be said that politics—that is, efforts to advance one's own cause or the cause of one's allies, or to retard the cause of one's antagonists—is antithetical to concern for human rights. George Bush, Saddam Hussein, Yitzhak Shamir, Deng Xiaoping, Augusto Pinochet, Mobutu Sese Seko or anyone else would protest abuses of human rights against themselves or their friends. Similarly, they would denounce such abuses by their enemies. Yet, by itself, this hardly adds up to a commitment to human rights. Such a commitment also requires a readiness to oppose abuses when they are committed by one's allies or those with whom one sympathizes politically; and a willingness to defend human rights when the victims are one's enemies or political antagonists, or when denouncing abuses may play into the hands of one's political opponents.

That said, it must be acknowledged that most of the energy that has gone into the human rights movement worldwide and helped it to become a powerful force in world affairs is generated by politics. It is not that principled advocates of human rights do not matter. In defying state power in defense of human rights, an Andrei Sakharov, a Fang Lizhi, a Paulo Evaristo Cardinal Arns of Brazil or a Gibson Kamau Kuria of Kenya may have enormous impact. Yet it is also the case that those who are politically motivated will seize on the efforts of even the most principled defenders of human rights for their own purposes. When Amnesty International published its recent report on Iraqi atrocities in Kuwait, for example, George Bush seemed to commit that report to memory and repeatedly cited Amnesty's findings in interviews. Yet Amnesty's reports on Iraq prior to August 2, 1990, and its reports on some nations in the military alliance against Iraq have had little impact for lack of a powerful political constituency eager to exploit those reports for its own political purposes.

Until the early 1980s, most of the political energy available to the human rights movement was supplied by the left. Although some organizations concerned with human rights internationally were founded long ago, and Amnesty International was established in 1961, it was only in the 1970s that the movement started to become a force, first in Europe and then in the United States. In this country, it drew most of its support at the outset from some of those on the left who had opposed the U.S. role in Vietnam and from those who were outraged at the U.S. part in the 1973 coup led by Pinochet against Salvador Allende in Chile. The abuses that characterized the Pinochet regime—extrajudicial executions, "disappearances," torture and political imprisonment—became the main focus of the human rights movement.*

As accounts of Pinochet's brutalities circulated, a few Democrats in Congress—former Representatives Don Fraser and Tom Harkin (the latter is now a senator) and Senator Edward Kennedy foremost among them—sponsored legislation to prohibit U.S. military and economic assistance to governments that practiced such cruelties. They succeeded in overcoming the opposition of President Gerald Ford and his Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, by enlisting support from members of Congress of both parties who were then discovering the human rights cause because of their interest in the dissident movement that had been emerging in the Soviet Union since its invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. Also, some conservatives supported the laws barring foreign assistance on human rights grounds because of their general hostility to the use of U.S. tax dollars to support other governments.

The legislation adopted in the mid-1970s committed the United States to making the promotion of human rights internationally a major factor in our government's foreign policy. That legislation focused on the physical abuses associated with regimes such as Pinochet's. Governments that "practice" such "gross abuses" are ineligible for U.S. aid except to meet "basic human needs."

In actuality, of course, such legislation has been enforced only at the discretion of the Administration in power, or when Congress has been willing to bar aid on a case-by-case basis. During the Carter Administration, when some in government were struggling to reassert a moral claim for U.S. foreign policy after the degrading failure in Vietnam, compliance was demanded primarily by the White House. Subsequently, under Reagan and during Bush's first two years, the termination of aid on human rights grounds has most often taken place because the Administration deferred to Congressional pressure or because of legislation focusing on the abuses of a particular country. Throughout, compliance with human rights laws has been at best spotty.

The most intense battle over compliance took place in the early days of the Reagan Administration over aid to El Salvador. Reagan and his Secretary of State, Alexander Haig, had made El Salvador the test case for demonstrating that the United States could defeat a left-wing insurgency. Opposition

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*As used here, the term "human rights" refers only to civil and political rights. In much of the world, human rights also refers to economic and social rights, and some have also argued that such matters as the right to a decent environment and the right to peace should be encompassed by the term human rights. The issues raised by these varying definitions of human rights are important but require more extended discussion than is possible here.

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to U.S. aid to the Salvadoran government, led by the left, focused on its human rights record, then among the bloodiest anywhere in the world. For a while, it seemed the opposition might prevail. The way that the Reagan forces capitalized on elections in El Salvador in 1982 to turn the tide in Congress, on the editorial pages and with the public also helped redefine the human rights issue and end the domination by the left of the politics of human rights.

By most criteria, the elections that took place in El Salvador on March 28, 1982, were preposterous. The left did not participate. Six top leaders of its political arm, the Democratic Revolutionary Front, had been kidnapped from a public meeting on November 27, 1980, and murdered. Any others bold enough to campaign could have expected a similar fate. Also, the military arm of the left, the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (F.M.L.N.), called for a boycott of the elections and threatened to attack voters. The far right won but was not allowed to take the presidency.

Its leader, Maj. Roberto D'Aubuisson, the leading suspect in the March 24, 1980, murder of Archbishop Oscar Arnulfo Romero, would have embarrassed the United States and jeopardized U.S. aid, so the military selected a nonentity who had not taken part in the campaign, Alvaro Magaña, and made him President. Some observers doubted that as many votes were cast as claimed by the Salvadoran authorities, and two years later, those doubts turned out to be well founded. An electoral official revealed that the parties that did take part had agreed to inflate the total by more than 25 percent while maintaining the proportions of the actual vote.

Yet those elections were a great victory for the Reagan Administration. In addition, they played a crucial part in suggesting a way to co-opt the human rights issue that had caused so much difficulty in its first year in office, when the Administration had been embarrassed by the Senate's refusal to confirm the President's first nominee for the post of Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights. That much of the left did not speak out against abuses of human rights by governments aligned with the Soviet Union, particularly in the Third World and above all in Nicaragua, aided Reagan and company in gaining control over some of the political capital of the human rights cause.

Those elections in El Salvador were important because they produced television scenes and newspaper photos of great numbers of ordinary Salvadorans standing in line for hours under the hot sun to cast their ballots. Never mind that their choice was limited, that voting was required or that too few polling places were provided, thus forcing them to stand in long lines. What mattered was that the people of El Salvador seemed to take the process seriously. That the F.M.L.N. had threatened to attack them for voting, of course, only made their readiness to stand up for their democratic rights more impressive.

Three months later, Reagan delivered an address to the British Parliament in which he embraced the human rights cause and equated it with democracy and elections. Previously, electoral democracy had been one of many goals of those promoting human rights, though not among their most urgent concerns. The speech was Reagan's most important statement of the right's new definition of human rights. He praised the bravery of the Salvadorans, argued that the elections refuted the charges of widespread human rights abuses and contrasted the elections in El Salvador with the refusal of the Sandinistas, who had taken power in Nicaragua in July 1979, to hold elections until 1985 (they were eventually moved up to November 1984). After being severely castigated for his Administration's support of military dictatorships in Latin America, the Philippines and elsewhere, Reagan was turning the issue around, depicting the Sandinistas as villains for their abuses of human rights. At times thereafter, Reagan and his associates used human rights abuses that they attributed to the Sandinistas as their foremost argument for the *contra* war.

By and large, the left's response was either to deny those abuses or to belittle them by comparing the Sandinistas with the Salvadoran and Guatemalan regimes supported by the United States. Neither response was wholly persuasive. The Reaganites could occupy some of the moral high ground that the left previously had to itself. Yes, the Reaganites exaggerated greatly, and those exaggerations had to be exposed. But Americas Watch tabulated hundreds of murders and "disappearances" of draft resisters and suspected *contra* or Miskito rebel collaborators during the Sandinistas' decade in power. By the standards of El Salvador or Guatemala, those are not large numbers, but by any standard of decency, the Sandinistas deserved denunciation. Most of the left failed to denounce those abuses, however, because to do so might seem to accept the distortions of the Reaganites and to legitimize the war to overthrow the Sandinistas.

Much of the left considered that its responsibility was to denounce vigorously abuses by right-wing regimes because those were the governments that enjoyed U.S. support. Much of the left has failed to denounce Fidel Castro's systematic

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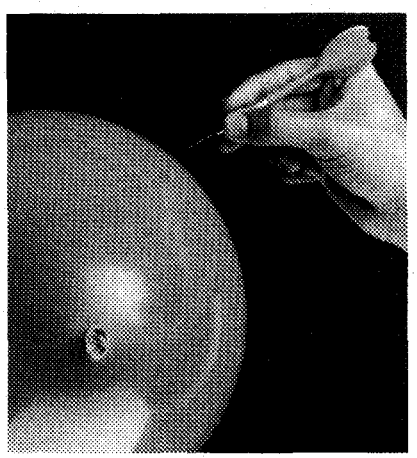

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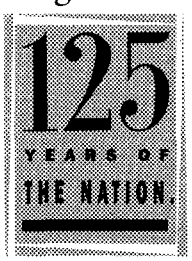

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abuses of human rights in Cuba, because this could appear to justify the U.S. campaign against his regime that has included invasion, efforts to murder Castro and a long-term embargo. Much of the left has failed to denounce abuses of human rights in Vietnam because of the misery that the United States inflicted on that country. Much of the left has failed to denounce abuses of human rights by black African governments out of guilt over the history of racism in the United States or out of unwillingness to appear to support South African propaganda about the consequences of black self-government. Much of the left failed to denounce human rights abuses in the Soviet Union out of a desire not to provide ammunition to cold warriors. Viewed politically, none of this may be irrational. However, viewed from the standpoint of concern for human rights, it has no more to commend it than the willingness of the right—for example, the editorial page of *The Wall Street Journal*—to denounce the abuses of a Castro while remaining silent about, or acting as an apologist for, the abuses of the Salvadoran military.

Some on the left have been more willing than most of those who speak out on human rights to denounce Israel's abuses against the Palestinians. Yet because those who have been vocal on this issue have often been susceptible to the charge that they have not also denounced abuses by the enemies of Israel, their effectiveness has been impaired.

The cost to the human rights cause of the failure of much of the left to act in a principled way has been considerable (it must be noted that there have been honorable exceptions to this broad-brush criticism of the left, among them those associated with the Campaign for Peace and Democracy). This failure helped to make it possible for the right to reshape human rights discourse and to prevail in some measure with the Reagan definition. The equation of human rights with electoral democracy has helped to deflect criticism on human rights grounds of a number of democratic governments, particularly in Latin America and East Asia.

Unfortunately, the physical abuses that were previously the main focus of attention to human rights have been widespread in some of those democracies. Yet during the second half of the 1980s, for example, most efforts to call attention to the disastrous human rights situation in Guatemala were effectively countered by that government's lobbyists, and by the Reagan and Bush administrations, by citing that country's electoral development. During that period, some liberals in Congress who had reputations as proponents of human rights vied with the Administration in their effort to demonstrate support for the government of President Vinicio Cerezo, both because he had been elected democratically and to reward him for his role in trying to end the *contra* war in Nicaragua. They succeeded in providing Guatemala with more U.S. aid than the Administration had requested. Thereby, they signaled to the Guatemalan military, which retained most actual power, that there would be no penalty for its gross abuses of human rights.

If there is a lesson in all this it is that the left's failure to be principled in its advocacy of human rights served neither the human rights cause nor the left. Whether it will serve the left politically in the future if it is more principled from now on, I cannot say; but only a principled approach will serve the human rights cause. □

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STARTING AT THE BOTTOM

Socialism Based In Community

GAR ALPEROVITZ

The left is, *and was always*, wrong: Capitalism is, *and will forever be*, triumphant. The condemning propositions ring from every source of conventional wisdom. In his widely quoted essay, Francis Fukuyama tells us that even history is over. Many on the left seem to agree. The argument needs to be dismantled, or as some put it, "unpacked."

Does it follow that because (1) undemocratic, (2) state-socialist systems in (3) the poorly developed countries of the Soviet bloc, which (4) for the most part had little previous history of democracy, (5) manifested enormous economic inefficiencies and (6) carried out repression of their people (7) during periods of war and cold war tension, *therefore* all forms of (8) democratic socialism (9) must necessarily fail, and (10) what we call capitalism (11) must inevitably prevail, (12) now and for all time?

Might there be efficient, democratic, nonstatist forms of socialism that liberate the citizenry more than centralized corporate capitalism? Especially in advanced, developed countries with a long history of democracy—countries that are not struggling up the steep mountain of capital accumulation? And above all in time of peace rather than of war or cold war? And is the conventional projection of twentieth-century political-economic history—and the lesson drawn that nothing, really, can ever change—a useful guide to the possibilities of the new century we are about to enter?

Gar Alperovitz, a fellow of the Institute for Policy Studies in Washington and president of the National Center for Economic Alternatives, is author of Atomic Diplomacy: Hiroshima and Potsdam.

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The implicit assumption that all forms of public enterprise and economic planning are inefficient begs additional questions. In the West, for instance, there are numerous public industries—from energy utilities to European airlines and auto producers—that are quite as efficient as private firms. Nor do most comparisons between free-market and socialist systems reckon with such obvious capitalist failures as America's backward-looking steel industry—to say nothing of several hundred billion dollars in savings and loan losses. And if all forms of socialism are *inherently* inefficient, just why is it that the Soviet space program so often outpaces America's?

None of this is to excuse the irrationalities of the dreary, state-socialist command economies, nor is it to contend against the utility of market mechanisms in any future alternative. However, most conventional accounts have so lost perspective that we need to jolt ourselves out of media-induced nodding if we are ever to make rational judgments about the real-world options we actually face.

Serious conservatives who are truly concerned about democracy are on stronger ground in arguing that highly centralized states are destructive of liberty. But here, too, there is extraordinary confusion. If one considers civil liberties, for instance, the most democratic and "civil libertarian" Western nations include some with very large state sectors, and the most repressive include some in which the state plays a relatively small role in the economy. The share of the government sector in economic life in civil libertarian Sweden, for instance, is more than double that of the state sectors in repressive El Salvador, South Korea and Turkey.

Obviously, factors other than the size of the state sector enter into the equation that determines whether a society will develop civil liberties and democracy. Among them are the level of economic development, the previous history of democracy and the existence of internal or external siege that may result (legitimately or not) in repressive measures. The experience of the Soviet Union, Bulgaria and Romania with autocratic or fascist histories prior to their adoption of socialism is radically different from that of the Scandinavian nations, Britain, the Netherlands, the United States or Canada.

It is also held that planned systems are necessarily inefficient at the so-called macro level—that is, the overall level of employment and the rate of economic growth. However (though our statistics leave much to be desired), many economists judge that despite enormous waste, growth in the Soviet bloc between 1950 and 1980 was better on average than in much of the West. For all its many problems—and the choices facing all developing nations are agonizing—development, especially of heavy industry, was much more impressive than many seem willing to acknowledge. Where these systems have been particularly weak is in agriculture and consumer industries, areas where markets can be especially helpful if properly structured.

Again, it is by no means obvious that the fundamental problems of Western capitalism have been solved. A good case can be made that after a highly unusual postwar era the U.S. economy is gradually returning to a pervasive pattern of stagnation that began early in the century. The "interruptions"

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of World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War and the cold war are now fading—and so too, it may well be, is America's "moment" of high economic growth.

Indeed, the stagnation of the post-Vietnam 1970s was countered only when the Reagan Administration opted for very conventional (albeit conservative) Keynesian measures: tax cuts, military spending and large deficits. When those ran their course, the only remaining policy card left to play was a dollar devaluation to stimulate exports. Now, as they stare dumbly at the politics of the deficit, policy-makers are empty-handed.

We shall soon also learn just how efficient capitalism will be in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, now that the initial excitement is over, and now that the confusion between the desire for democracy and the idea that capitalism will solve all problems is beginning to be dispelled. Whether these societies will actually remain democratic as the new stresses hit is, in fact, a major question: Bulgaria, Romania and Yugoslavia are dubious candidates for democracy from the outset—and Lech Walesa in Poland and even Vaclav Havel in Czechoslovakia already seem to be positioning themselves for rule, at least in part, by presidential decree.

More fundamentally, there are obvious difficulties with the meaning of "democracy" in Western capitalism and with the relationship of the economic system to inequality. In the most recent U.S. Congressional elections only about 36 percent of those eligible voted. Construction worker Bobby Machicek speaks for many in his bitter reflection on politics and politicians:

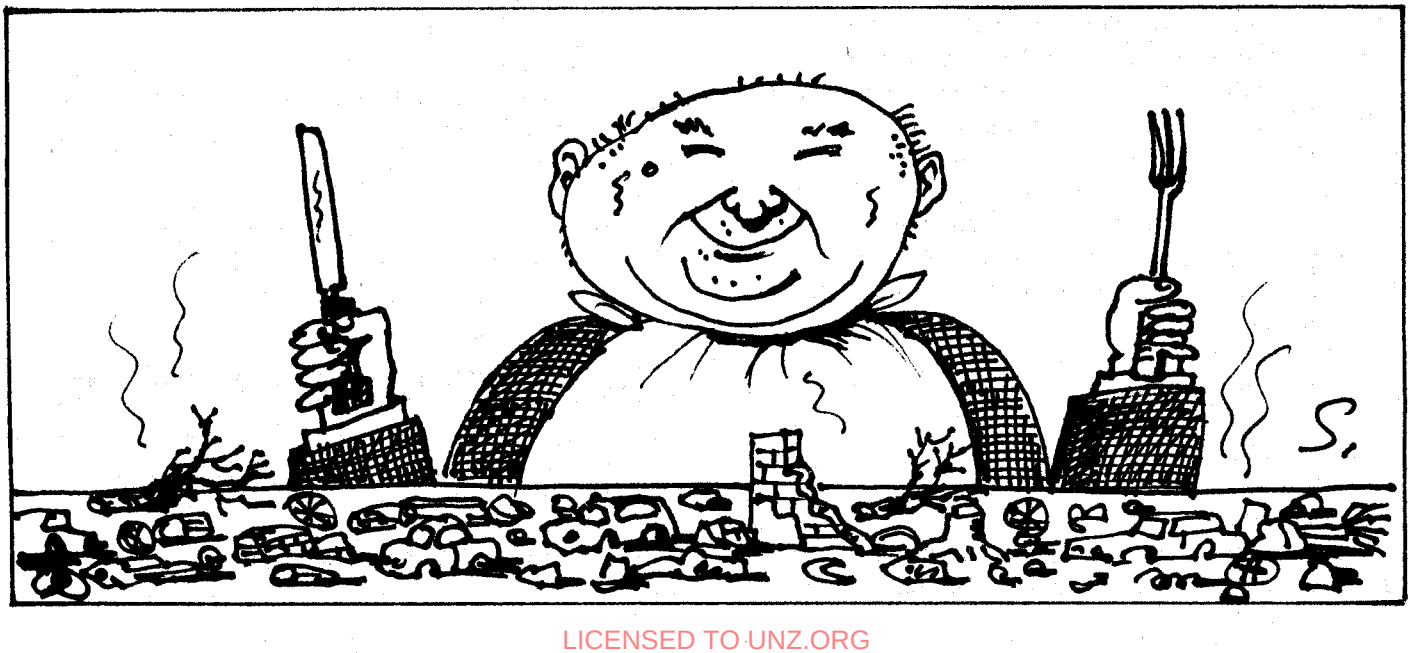
> When it comes time to vote they all pretend they care about people, and they start cutting on each other, but it's all just a rat race. It doesn't mean anything. One guy says he'll change things, he gets in, and then he leaves and the next guy talks about how bad the last guy was. It goes on and on like that.

And it was not a radical critic but Ronald Reagan who pointed out—*before* the recent Gorbachev reforms—that in the House of Representatives, "with a 98 percent rate of re-election, there is less turnover . . . than in the Supreme Soviet."

Democracy, if it is to be more than a facade for special interest-group maneuvering and indirect control by the wealthy, requires that all have roughly equal capacity to participate. Yet money and television tend increasingly to dominate elections. And when there are vast differences in wealth, education, free time and personal security, citizens with low incomes are fundamentally disadvantaged. They do not have the money to influence politics, their education does not give them as many skills, they don't have the time and often, fearful of losing their jobs, they prefer silence to speaking their minds.

Democracy dies when inequality grows—and capitalism generates extraordinary degrees of inequality: The wealthiest 20 percent of the population now receive approximately 50 percent of all income (including interest, rent and dividends). About the same number of human beings at the bottom make do on less than 3.7 percent of such income. Long before the Reagan era, there was scant evidence—even at the height of the New Deal—that the welfare state did more than marginally alter relative income distribution. Only war has had any significant positive impact. The absolute gap between those at the top and those at the bottom has been increasing for decades.

In short, as we approach a new century all the existing systems seem to be exhausting their capacity to achieve underlying values and affirmed goals. Consider the possibility that even as the East decays, the West—especially the United States—may be entering a period in which the economy neither booms nor collapses and the welfare state neither succeeds nor totally fails. Substantial economic stagnation (with minor boomlets and significant recessions) generates slow decay and growing frustration, but there is no dramatic crisis. Global economic integration increasingly produces local economic distress. Minor wars occur but, given nuclear weapons and the public's loss of appetite for extended combat, there are no large "economy-organizing" wars like Korea and Vietnam. Nothing works; movements oriented around specific issues regularly appear and fade away; alienation grows; revolution is not possible. Populist or progressive upsurges occasionally occur but are unable to alter fundamental trends. Meanwhile the (state) socialist model disappears as a mean-



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ingful alternative. Add to this a growing ecological crisis.

It *may* be that in such conditions, ultimately there will be a significant social democratic, populist political realignment to complete the welfare state. But given America's racial, ethnic, regional and other divisions—and its huge size, historic conservatism and longstanding social and economic trends—in my judgment the odds are against anything more than a temporary upswing of modestly enduring impact. More likely is a continuing trend of decay and failure that will slowly destroy all the old beliefs, leading first to ever deeper disillusionment, then to profound apathy, then to delegitimation of the existing system, then to anger—and possibly, after a long dark winter of discontent, to a demand for something different: for *perestroika*, for reconstruction, American style. Not, as in the Soviet Union, away from state socialism but rather in reaction to the strange and painful experience of late twentieth-century American capitalism.

A society in stalemate—one that generates alienation—is a breeding ground for violence.

In such an extended, eerie, half-light context, as unsolved problems build at the local level, as reform fails, as the traditional vision of socialism falters, any serious demand for change would ultimately have to define a completely new direction. In 1948 the philosopher Martin Buber argued that all the major traditions were already at a dead end. He urged a slow and agonizing reconstruction of local, cooperative community economic institutions in a "long march" to a different future. Even earlier—in 1934—W.E.B. Du Bois argued that the only hope in a continental power system like the United States was to rebuild from the bottom up. Du Bois, too, urged collective, community economic institutions as a central requirement of any serious black alternative, however difficult their development might be.

In recent years André Gorz, Murray Bookchin, Harold Cruse, Herman Daly and Robert Bellah, to name only a few thinkers of varying political perspectives, have reached roughly similar conclusions. One also finds echoes of the argument for a third-way, community-based vision, organized step by step, locality by locality, in the writings of Lewis Mumford, Paul Goodman and Jacques Maritain. There are also numerous experiments and examples—from worker-owned firms and co-ops, to new energy and ecological approaches, to community land-banks and land trusts—that suggest possibilities in this as yet only vaguely defined direction.

The deadlock of the national system may well have other implications: The late William Appleman Williams argued that a national stalemate could force the question of a long-term regional regroupment. If the federal government cannot act, then problems must build up at the state or regional level; this defines another focal point for serious politics. In many states new economic planning techniques are being developed that could have implications for a community-building strategy—if new political coalitions would bend them to such purposes. Larger-scale, publicly accountable industry ultimately might best be located at the regional level as well. In some large polities—Texas and California, perhaps—a slow movement toward substantial political-economic self-determination might well gather real momentum in the context of long-term national stalemate. In others, groups of states—New England and the Pacific Northwest—might begin to act together.

A society in stalemate—one that generates alienation—is also clearly a breeding ground for violence. There have already been major community-police face-offs in Miami, Los Angeles, New Jersey, Shreveport, Louisiana, and other cities. We can expect more. Both George Bush and Jesse Helms have demonstrated their callous understanding of how to manipulate racist politics, and we can also expect more of this. Combined with crime, drugs and confrontations with the police, this factor provides good reason to expect serious repression in the future. We face a judicial system dominated by Reagan-Bush appointees and supervised by the Rehnquist Supreme Court. It is an open question whether the 1990s will bring a form of Bertram Gross's "friendly" (or not so friendly) fascism or merely scattered and decentralized repression.

Still, Chile survived its Pinochet, and in dark political days it is all too easy to despair. Cynicism, Sartre once warned, is just another way of being bourgeois—and, he might have added, of giving away the future by default. It is, of course, possible that nothing can ever be done. But it is also easy to confuse a difficult moment in history with inevitability.

There remains the overwhelming need for progressives to consider what, specifically, they want. If state socialism is dead and the welfare state is fading, what makes sense over the long haul? Some form of community-nourishing, regionally decentralized system—one that also intelligently faces problems of ecological balance and the need for economic coordination and planning—seems to honor the values of equality, democracy and community. Such a system could also nourish the development of the free individual, and it addresses honest conservative fears of centralized statism as inherently destructive of liberty.

Were the left to rebuild its vision in ways that truly honored such values, and were it to undertake a long reconstructive, community-building march through the painful debris of a society in stalemate, a new progressive movement might ultimately find that it speaks to the concerns of the American people more directly than any of the old, dying traditions. Quite possibly it might write a radically new and dynamic chapter of history in the new century. □

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BOOKS & THE ARTS.

Women's Welfare

EILEEN BORIS

WOMEN, THE STATE, AND WELFARE. *Edited by Linda Gordon. University of Wisconsin. 311 pp. $35. Paper $12.95.*

CREATING A FEMALE DOMINION IN AMERICAN REFORM, 1890-1935. *By Robyn Muncy. Oxford University Press. 221 pp. $28.*

As feminist scholars in the 1980s confronted the Reaganite dismantling of the welfare state, the reputation of the women who earlier in the century had defined social problems, lobbied for legislative solutions and staffed new state agencies like the Children's Bureau began to rise dramatically. Social democracy—as opposed to feminist revolution—looked more attractive and so too did the Julia Lathrops, Grace Abbotts and Florence Kelleys who had pioneered the development of the welfare state. Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Alice Paul had loomed large in the pantheon of feminist heroines during the 1970s, when equal treatment arguments (women the same as men) dominated feminist discourse, and not these other women who spoke in terms of "sacred motherhood" and defended the "family wage," a paycheck large enough for a man to support his wife and children. For those of us on the left, the women reformers were a big disappointment because they made capitalism work better (instead, we loved Emma Goldman and the anonymous girl strikers of the great uprisings of the garment workers). We dismissed them not only for their emphasis on female weakness in the fight for minimum-wage laws but also for Americanization programs directed toward immigrants, that is, for what appeared to be social control of those lower in the scale of power and privilege.

But in the 1980s a new generation of feminists, experiencing its own demographic shift into motherhood, began to understand the deficiency of the "supermom" model, especially for women without economic resources, and the difficulty of combining childbearing and dependent care with inadequately compensated waged labor in a privatized care environment. Special treatment arguments (women as different from men), for which protective labor legislation and mothers' pensions were representative proposals of that earlier generation, regained stature. Thus feminist arguments again emphasized how equality for women required taking into account women's differences from men as mothers, rewarding care-giving as a social activity and re-evaluating the meaning of rights and needs, as Nancy Fraser and Elizabeth Schneider do in their contributions to *Women, the State, and Welfare*, a collection of twelve essays edited by Linda Gordon. Standards of judgment shifted from individual rights to social responsibility, to a socialized ethic of care that collectivized the meaning of antidiscrimination among some women's rights activists. Rights could mean entitlements, as the welfare rights movement of the 1960s had shown. In this context, the women who helped create the welfare state gained a new hearing. Yet, well aware of the ways that protective legislation for women had been used to lower wages and deny job opportunities, we began to question the adequacy of either the equal treatment or special treatment argument and the general understanding of equality and difference as a binary opposition rather than as parts of a complex multiplicity.

These books belong to a larger trend of putting the state back into social history.

Linda Gordon herself exemplifies this evolution. A professor of history at the University of Wisconsin, she holds the Florence Kelley chair, named after the translator of Engels, a socialist and feminist who, as the executive secretary of the National Consumers' League, sought state programs to protect working women and children from the 1890s until her death in 1932. Gordon, herself a pioneer in the modern women's liberation movement and the writing of women's history, notably brought politics and scholarship together first in *Woman's Body, Woman's Right: A Social History of Birth Control in America* (1976). This was an impassioned defense of women's autonomy and an attack on state regulation of women's sexuality. Her latest book, however, shows us that women's relation to the state is more complex, building on the prizewinning *Heroes of Their Own Lives: The Politics and History of Family Violence, Boston 1880-1960* [see Elsa Dixler, "The Dangerous Home," April 9, 1988].

Gordon's interdisciplinary collection, which brings together some of the best feminist thinking on women and the state, and University of Maryland professor Robyn Muncy's history, a finely crafted study of the ways that women's entrance into the professions initiated a child welfare policy "dominion," belong to a larger trend of putting the state back into a social history that at its worst buried power relations under the details of daily life. The new scholarship on women's roles in the creation of the welfare state has broken through the separate spheres that had developed in academic life, with women studying private matters and leaving the state—that is, public structures of power and domination—to men. By concentrating on women's culture, the family, women's bodies and even the workplace, feminist scholars had left intact a narrative of state formation in which the Roosevelt Administration fulfilled the promise of social welfare instituted by genderless reformers in the early twentieth century and the War on Poverty became a struggle between white and black men over income redistribution.

We now know better. As Muncy points out, social policy not only has "regulated" the lives of women differently from men of their race and class but "gender has itself shaped social policy." Explaining both these propositions has been the goal of what Gordon calls "the new feminist scholarship on the [welfare state]." Muncy's book is a fine example of recent works that critically document women's political activism and their influence on the making of the welfare system. Begin-

Eileen Boris, who teaches history at Howard University, is working on a book on women, gender and the state, In Defense of Motherhood: The Politics of Industrial Homework in the United States. *She is co-editor of* Homework: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on Paid Labor at Home *(University of Illinois).*

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ning in the early 1980s, scholars showed that public policy had a differential impact on the sexes. Some argued that the state was "patriarchal," though the nature of ruling-class men's power over women and lower-class and racially subordinate men shifted over time. This growing interdisciplinary body of work began to question the adequacy of explanations of welfare-state development—whether neoconservative or neo-Marxist—that neglect gender.

The origins of the welfare state—such programs as labor standards, mothers' pensions and Social Security, which includes Aid to Families with Dependent Children (A.F.D.C.), or what we commonly call welfare—can be traced to the efforts of white, middle-class and educated women first through voluntary organizations like the National Consumers' League and the social settlement houses, then through local government and finally through the federal government itself. This is a story beautifully told in Muncy's analysis of the network of women who began at Hull House, ran the Children's Bureau, educated their successors at the University of Chicago's School of Social Service Administration and commanded the energies of organized white women throughout the nation to sustain their control over maternal and child welfare, a realm thought proper for women but also open to them because of its recent incorporation into the state bureaucracy.

But these women did not impose a solution on those who became their clients. Social movements, best presented in the collection by Jane Jenson's comparison of France with the United States, made a difference; so did the struggles of the recipients of social programs who took what they could from welfare agencies. From her analysis of family violence at the turn of the century, when immigrant mothers sought out child-protection workers to curb patriarchal abuse, Gordon has concluded, "The welfare state was not a bargain in which the poor got material help by giving up control. The control itself was invented and structured out of these interactions" between client and provider. Teresa Amott turns standard perceptions upside down when she asserts in her study of black women and A.F.D.C., "Welfare need not be seen as a social problem but rather as a vital source of income to single mothers whose economic choices are constrained by the myriad of ways that racism and sexism structure economic life." The agency of women overcomes social control or bureaucratic inevitability as political scientists, economists and sociologists look to historical explanations for the gendering of state policy, expanding their subject matter to include the impact of unpaid family labor on the overall position of women. The boundaries of state policy thus move beyond income redistribution or social provision to include actions that influence sexuality, employment opportunity, education and family structure.

Policy thinkers, like prior scholars, ignored how gender ideologies—our conceptions of womanhood and manhood, which historically in this country have taken white, middle-class ideals as the norm—have shaped social programs. Thus even the self-activity of Muncy's subjects produced, as Gordon suggests, a "white vision of public welfare—aid to needy children, replacement of male wages for dependent wives, protection for working women in industrial and urban enterprises—[that] took as given the structures that not only excluded blacks but confirmed them in subordination." Major New Deal programs, from Social Security to the Fair Labor Standards Act, never covered the majority of people of color, either because their job categories were uncovered (agriculture or intrastate industries) or because local administrators discriminated in determining eligibility.

Social programs, then, have hardly been neutral. While women's poverty, as Diana Pearce argues in her essay, differs from men's, programs have revolved around either a male breadwinner or a male pauper model, both of which present employment as the solution. Not only do discrimination and the sexual division of labor relegate women to jobs with wages so low that even full-time work leaves them poor, but women also "mother." Jobs programs by themselves fail to address the devaluation of women's nurturing labor or, as others might claim, fail to relieve women of such responsibility. Indeed, Virginia Sapiro suggests that both unemployment insurance and welfare were organized to maintain female dependency in a polity in which citizenship, as Gwendolyn Mink contends in the most provocative piece in *Women, the State, and Welfare*, derived from a "white men's democracy" that linked independence to a racialized manhood and relied upon properly educated mothers to socialize the alien.

Men as breadwinners earned unemployment insurance and workmen's com-

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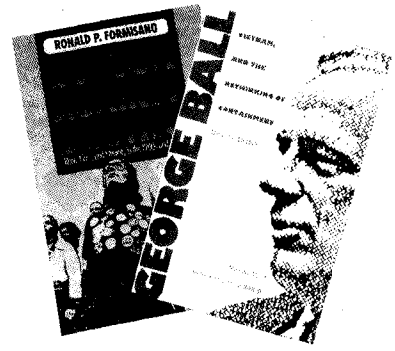

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pensation; women as care givers gained mothers' pensions, the forerunner to A.F.D.C. Such a two-track system, according to Barbara Nelson, divided along gender lines not only in the intent to renew men's independence and maintain women's dependence but also in procedures, with men falling under standardized rules and women subject to "moralistic, diffuse decision criteria." Poised at the front door, the caseworker would check to see if there was any man in the house who presumably, by virtue of sleeping with the mother, could support her children.

Muncy too explores this irony: The women who built social welfare institutions, who had forged an alternative conception of professionalism based on service to others, imposed the male breadwinner ethic and reinforced female domesticity for other women. Her evaluation contains a critique of maternalism, the ideology that regards women necessarily as mothers and makes claims for rights on that basis. Maternalism was central to the women's political culture of the time, as traced in Paula Baker's contribution to the Gordon book. Such a critique is refreshing, since so much of recent scholarship reduces the social movements of women activists to their maternalism and thereby neglects the feminist origins of state policy: the impulse to liberate women from class and male exploitation and to lessen the burdens of maternity.

Muncy further shifts our attention to the feminist roots of welfare state development by focusing on the struggle of white middle-class women for professional achievement. Thus she also tells a story of contrasting understandings of professionalism: One, embraced by the women's reform network, would popularize expert knowledge and link science to social activism; another, represented by its opponents in the American Medical Association, would separate expert from client and seek financial gain for the individual. Muncy's analysis of the demise of the Sheppard-Towner Maternity and Infancy Act of the 1920s emphasizes these different professional cultures: The first, which promoted state services, succumbed to the second, which found political expression in privatized bureaucratic expertise. The women of the Children's Bureau would see their programs come to fruition during the New Deal, but they themselves lost power as the child welfare dominion splintered into numerous agencies, male experts entered the fray and hiring turned to political patronage rather than the women's reform network, whose remaining members had been incorporated into the Roosevelt coalition.

As Frances Fox Piven claims in a 1984 article in *Women, the State, and Welfare*, the state can serve as "the main recourse of women" by providing "income supports, social services, and government employment." Fox Piven wrote when a gender gap promised to make a difference in American politics. With retrenchment of domestic programs and a revitalized war machine, with a new fiscal crisis curbing government employment as well as social services and with an Administration that vetoes parental leave and civil rights, her words seem optimistic in 1991. Understanding history cannot substitute for a political movement to revitalize and shape the welfare state, but it can alert us to the gender and race hierarchies we have no desire to replicate. □

Sweet Home Chicago

MAUD LAVIN

THE PROMISED LAND: The Great Black Migration and How It Changed America. *By Nicholas Lemann. Knopf. 410 pp. $24.95.*

Last July the Bush Administration issued a policy statement on its plans for fighting poverty, unabashedly explaining: "The members of the Domestic Policy Council wanted to do something about poverty, but we realized we didn't have any cash. We wanted to adopt a set of principles, but couldn't figure out how to convert our enthusiasm to anything concrete." With a lighthearted touch, a spokesperson told *The New York Times* that the idea was "to keep playing with the same toys" but "paint them a little shinier." The official continued, with an implicit swipe at Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty, "We have decided to abjure a glitzy, splashy, high-profile announcement of new programs and a grand new strategy."

It is for tackling this now-conventional wisdom—that during the Johnson Administration the federal government, at great expense, did all it could to combat poverty and nothing worked—that I feel most grateful to Nicholas Lemann for writing *The Promised Land*. The book grew out of two long articles he wrote for *The Atlantic*, where he is national correspondent. Those pieces focused on black culture, attempting to tie the experience of Southern sharecroppers to Northern ghetto behavior. That conservative argument, which views the culture of poverty as self-perpetuating, was mixed, in Lemann's writing, with a traditional liberal call for government jobs programs. The essays were immediately attacked from the left for explaining poverty almost solely in cultural terms and for giving inadequate attention to political and economic context. But in the book-length treatment, which investigates federal policies as well as the lives of the poor, Lemann takes a broader approach.

The Promised Land is something of a tour de force. Lemann has taken on a huge and surprisingly unanalyzed topic: the great black migration from the rural South to the urban North in the years between 1940 and 1970. He argues that the federal government failed to respond adequately to the needs of those citizens desperately trying to better themselves, and that, in some cases (as in allowing segregation in public housing), actually made things worse. Lemann writes from the point of view of people cursed by poverty, and he dovetails that story with a narrative of the concurrent evolution (or nonevolution) of poverty policy in Washington.

As a result of the mechanization of cotton agriculture, the dissolution of the sharecropper system, the pervasiveness of racism in the South and the promise of better jobs in the North, more than 5 million African-Americans streamed into the urban ghettos in the three decades after the Depression. Once in Northern cities like Chicago, however, their dreams began to fade. Living-wage jobs for unskilled labor began to dry up, public schools were overcrowded and inadequate and Northern racism was more pervasive than Southern blacks had imagined. What was worse, the government was totally unprepared to serve the needs of a displaced citizenry, of an internal migration far larger than the wave from any individual European country. But government did not fail entirely. Some antipoverty efforts of the 1960s, like the early childhood education program Head Start, were outstanding successes. And the creation of social service-oriented government jobs serving the

Maud Lavin writes regularly on welfare and poverty.

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poor inadvertently cemented the foundation of a black middle class.

Lemann tells this sprawling saga through intriguing life stories. We learn about the resilient Ruby Lee Haynes, for example, who began life as a sharecropper in the Mississippi Delta, moved to Chicago, worked as a janitor and in a laundry, and had a long stint on welfare. All the while, Haynes raised eight children and survived a tumultuous relationship with her husband only to be confronted with—and nearly defeated by—the unbearable living conditions in the Robert Taylor Homes, a Chicago housing project whose poverty and crime rates are among the worst in the country. Lemann provides a vivid picture of the parlous life in the Robert Taylor Homes through numerous interviews with residents who describe the dangers they face every day. But he also puts these harrowing images in perspective when he says, "In the context of the rest of the world, the social disorder in the project is even worse than the poverty: plenty of places outside the United States have lower per capita incomes, but very few can match it in such measures as infant mortality, birth weight, life expectancy, crime, and family structure."

The book is tightly constructed by locale; we travel from Clarksdale, Mississippi, to Chicago, to Washington, D.C., back to Chicago and back to Clarksdale, where Ruby Haynes has returned in search of a safer life. Lemann clearly spent a great deal of time on the road, talking to people and, more important, listening. To his credit, he seems to have changed some of his earlier culture-of-poverty views as a result of what he learned from Ruby Haynes and others. Still, we miss any kind of personal response from Lemann; this is unfortunate because even a glimpse of his own emotions or confusions would make these interviews seem more reciprocal and respectful. The reader can't help wondering how Lemann felt in regularly visiting the Robert Taylor Homes, a place he says no one should have to inhabit.

In the past, it was this failure to analyze his own prejudices that led several liberal and leftist writers on poverty, including me, to criticize Lemann. For example, in his July 1986 article in *The Atlantic*, Lemann wrote, "Out-of-wedlock childbearing . . . is today by far the greatest contributor to the perpetuation of the misery of ghetto life." In *The Promised Land* Lemann is more sensitive to gender issues, and while he continues to describe

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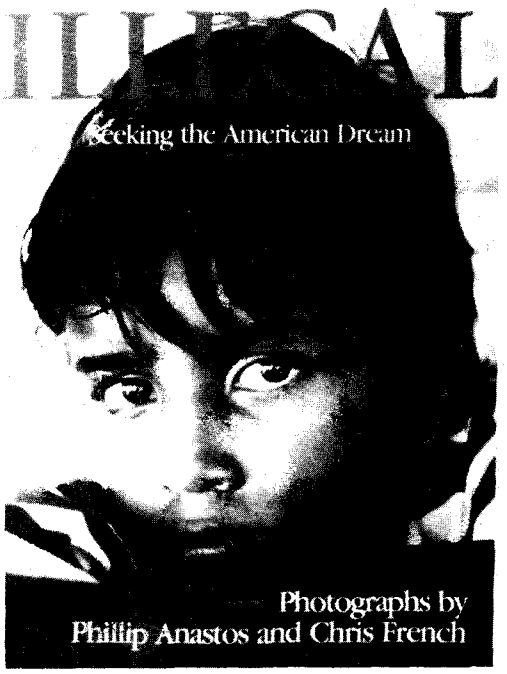

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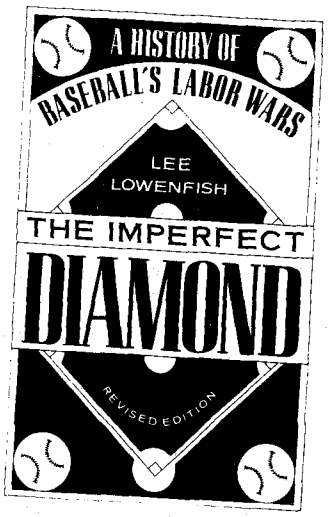

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self-destructive behavior he encounters, most of it involving drugs and violence, he now talks respectfully of female-headed households, recognizing that women are often the social glue in ghetto society.

In the section on Washington, Lemann delves eagerly into the personal ambitions, grubby politicking and macho posturing of such policy-makers as Robert Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson, Daniel Patrick Moynihan and Richard Nixon. Because Lemann treats these public figures less gingerly than he does the poor people he interviews, the book livens up at this point. We also begin to understand how Washington maneuvering affected the life and death of much-needed poverty programs in the 1960s and 1970s.

Stunningly well researched, Lemann's account of Johnson-era political wrangling is essential reading. He details incredible bungling by the federal government, as when he describes the overaccelerated formation of the Job Corps, a program that put inner-city teens in summer camps for job-skills training. Apparently Sargent Shriver, then director of the Office of Economic Opportunity, "insisted that 10,000 kids be enrolled in the Job Corps camps by the end of June 1965; his staff had them sleeping on the floors of gymnasiums to meet the quota." Lemann is critical of the pressure to implement programs nationwide, without any testing, merely to serve politicians'—particularly Johnson's—personal ambitions. Lemann is especially hard on the War on Poverty's focus on community development (attempting to provide ghetto-based social services and to entice industry to move to poor neighborhoods). He argues that community development, combined with segregated public housing, often contained the most desperately poor people in ghettos. It sounded good but it enforced racial separation and achieved little in the fight against poverty. In Chicago, for example, living in public housing meant staying in the poorest sections of the city. And industry did not flock to the ghettos.

Although Lemann's book does not address Bush Administration policies, this last bit of analysis provides a useful analogy with current proposals by HUD Secretary Jack Kemp for the "empowerment" of poor people. Kemp's proposed HOPE (Homeownership Opportunities for People Everywhere) program, for instance, is designed to help residents of public housing buy their units. But historically, as Lemann points out, attempts to provide "choice" in a ghetto setting have accomplished little. Who really wants the choice of owning her own apartment in a project where murder is a constant danger? What anyone living in public housing like the Robert Taylor Homes most wants is to move out.

Curiously, though, Lemann dismisses "empowerment" not only because of the way Kemp has usurped the language of civil rights activism but because Lemann does not seem to believe in the efficacy of community action. He complains that local activist participation in the 1960s hampered the smooth running of federal programs: "Certainly all of the greatest controversies of the community action program had to do with the unbridgeable gap between the black-power movement and the political system." Seemingly, the political or psychological benefits of participation hold no appeal for Lemann.

While I would agree that it is the federal government's responsibility to serve poor citizens (it is clearly the best administrator for income-dispersal programs like food stamps and welfare benefits), I'm shocked that Lemann denies the need for community-level activism. Need one really argue that federalism and social change do not always go hand in hand? Under Johnson's Office of Economic Opportunity, "community action" emphasized the participation of poor people. Of course, some of those poor people were radicals; as Lemann reports, their agitation ultimately alienated many mayors and eventually cost them federal funding. Lemann tends to blame all setbacks on "maximum feasible participation," as community involvement was called. But in so doing, he naïvely assumes that without activism the federal government would work in poor people's best interests. He ignores or downplays the tremendously effective pressure brought to bear on government by the quite different activist forms of the civil rights movement and the urban race riots. While it may be true that concentrating on local social services will do less to alleviate poverty than federally driven government job and income programs, to see these as competing ideas is not helpful.

In this study, both blame and recommendations for future action focus on government. Like William Julius Wilson, Lemann is alarmed at the exodus of the black middle class from the ghettos and the resulting social isolation of poor blacks. Lemann is attracted to efforts like the Gautreaux program in Chicago, which

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disperses and relocates public-housing residents in middle-class, integrated neighborhoods, thereby providing both a safer environment and role models. However, while some recent evidence shows that moving undereducated poor people to suburbs where more jobs are located does improve their chances of employment, it does not cure poverty. The new jobs are, more often than not, low-paying service-sector positions, and the new employees suffer the dilemma of America's working poor: laboring full time at an unpleasant job and still not making enough to lift a family above the poverty line. Poverty reform must take into account the national economic structure; relocation has to go hand in hand with programs to aid the working poor.

Lemann is also a proponent of government jobs. He correctly points out that the single most effective way the government has aided poor blacks is in providing jobs as police officers, bus drivers, teachers and administrators. Ironically, the effectiveness of this practice is most apparent now; those being laid off in government cutbacks are predominantly minorities and women. Supplying permanent government jobs is a good idea, but again, it is not the whole solution. First, it presupposes an economy healthy enough to pull all its poor people into the middle class with tax-funded jobs. Second, it dodges the question of why non-government jobs are so inadequate. If we had a decent minimum wage, if we increased tax credits for the working poor and improved basic social services like child care and national health insurance (which almost every other industrialized country seems to manage), we would not need utopian fantasies about a government job for every poor person. A book as well written as this one will be widely influential; leaving out recommendations for structural change in the fight against poverty actually does damage.

Which leaves me with what is at once the simplest and most complex problem raised by this book. Why write about black ghetto poverty? After all, most poor people in this country are white. There is also a large and underreported population of Latino poor. And more than three-quarters of the nation's poor do not live in urban ghettos. Doesn't focusing on black poverty feed into the widely held prejudice that poverty is a disease spread by black people on that very trek now called "the great black migration"? Yet I think Lemann made a wise choice. He tackles the prejudice head on and counters it with a moral imperative that our government at long last do right by its black citizens. A second prejudice is that there are no new ideas on poverty, nothing we can do that hasn't already been tried and failed. Though proponents of this view may justify their statements by reference to the so-called failure of the war on poverty, I suspect that is a cover for racism, for an attitude that differentiates the middle-class white self from "those people" who are black and poor, an excuse for inaction and segregation by both race and class. So it is all the more important that Lemann has offered a "new idea," that the great black migration caused a social and economic deprivation that our government has still to address adequately. And Lemann's careful reporting on people who live in ghetto poverty makes it less possible for a dehumanizing racism to turn them into undeserving objects. *The Promised Land* is a flawed book, but it is a moral one, and at a time when government and society have become so distinct, there is nothing more important. □

Street Theater

ROBERT NICHOLS

THE BREAD AND PUPPET THEATRE. *By Stefan Brecht. Methuen. Volume I, 783 pp.; Volume II, 813 pp. Each $22.50.*

As intellectual history this book (1,600 pages, a third of it footnotes in small type: reviews, articles, notices, running commentaries, conversations and interviews) is prodigious—in scope and completeness almost like the world itself. As with the world, one has the sensation of *being there*, of suddenly turning a corner and being present at some happening or moment. For myself, there is the pleasure of recollection. I don't know if that holds for the general reader. On the other hand, there have been thousands of performances here and in foreign countries; it's hard to imagine anyone interested in theater who hasn't "seen" the Bread and Puppet. This is part of Brecht's series, "The Original Theatre of the City of New York," on "the culturally revolutionary florescence of the American theater, circa 1963-73": nine books on eight different theaters.

The Bread and Puppet Theatre has always been reviewed more extensively in Europe—in countless articles, books and collections of photographs. There was a period in the United States when it was much written about, but that time has long passed. Still, the theater continues. One could say that its audience—numbering 20,000–30,000 for the mid-August 1990 *Resurrection Circus*—has grown in direct proportion as its interest for theater critics has shrunk. The question of why this is so is interesting. Many answers could be given, such as, It is no longer necessary to discover it. It is no longer a comet bursting in the theatrical sky. One of the uses of Stefan Brecht's book is that it takes us deeper than the conventional categories, toward real insight, as in the note for June 1970:

> The idea of a circus apparently came to [Peter] Schumann as a reaction against the performance of *Cry* on the European tour in regular established theatres with their habitual audiences: fancy or bourgeois, at any rate not popular and expecting and paying for art, not merely, like circus audiences, entertainment (and excitement, skill and beauty). He wanted to be independent of these mausoleums and these culture cravers. A popular audience was the aim.

What we have is Brecht puzzling this out. What after all is in the mind of Peter Schumann? One feels the writer almost obsessively interested in this. He has developed a Hegelian method of examination, critically probing, pushing into the cracks of the heart—which is always and at the same time a self-examination by Brecht. That is, he has developed a vivid and modern prose. In some passages he seems to hurl himself at Schumann; he wants to amass his entire creation—the sculpture, masks, performers—to take its raw measure. He stands toe to toe and slugs it out with him—as a German, as an expert and master of the theater, as an observer of the century with a cold eye, as a fellow hypocrite, scourge of sentiment and morality. He is fascinated to tear him down at the same time he builds him up. But he is enough of a storyteller that Schumann, wounded by his biographer, becomes a grand narrative figure.

> [In Europe in 1968, the year of the "Paris Spring"] He maneuvered, com-

Robert Nichols's collection of short stories, In the Air, *will be published in June by Johns Hopkins.*

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promised, tried to keep the tour going and his plays intact ideologically and artistically. . . . He had Eckhardt court-martialed out of the group . . . in Ste. Baume, and similarly got rid of Leherrissier's lover, the other extremist in the group . . . before they went to Poland . . . and Ernstthal, another important "hippie," left in Scandinavia. . . .

[Back in New York] His situation at this time may be summarized as follows. . . . During the '60s, Off-off-Broadway theatre had established itself. It was in a mode of sex, violence and ego totally alien to his. This mode was in vogue. Though he was not quite broke, he was poor as always. . . . The form of the Peace Movement in which he had flourished as artist, namely a quasi-continuous street agitation, had virtually disappeared, and in any event public protest as such was no longer its key form: the peculiar deployment of his new kind of theatre had become otiose. In truth, I would say, the environment of hippies and radicals he had worked himself into had become hateful to him, its fervors and sincerities, no less than its arrogantly naive shallowness suffocated him. . . . He wanted to strike out in a new direction.

The title of this section is "December '69, New York City. Flat on his arse."

I doubt if there has ever been such a passionate work of scholarship and intensive documentation, where the scholar virtually spits out the minutiae in wonder and rage. Listed in the appendix are 134 shows and their several performances. Devoted to each are some text, the action sequence and a description of masks and music, with sometimes a drawing or musical score. The method has two steps. The watcher transcribes, *goes with* the performance, suspends disbelief, becomes part of it—then steps back and asks, What is meant? Did it perform what it meant or something else? Is what was meant worth saying in the first place? That is, he goes from credulity to criticism.

As a work of reference it's all there, in chronological order. There are the plays. There is an overall summation. The history of Schumann's creative activity is divided into grand periods. "Up phases" and "down phases" are correlated with crises in Peter Schumann's personal life and with historical circumstances. The reader may skip and zero in on some date or material. It's rather like combing through a large attic looking for treasures. In this way I rediscovered an old acquaintance and master printmaker, Dick Tyler, in a footnote (by himself) on the Uranian Phalanstery players, as wild, crazy and cunning as Blake's "An Island in the Moon" and written in essentially the same idiom, signed after seven ranting pages:

Love
Rev. Relytor Dr. Urania
Uranian Phalanstery
328 E. 4th St., N.Y.C.
New York, 10009 U.S.A.

The address now an empty lot.

This is characteristic of the U.S. left movement, whatever that is: the elements of risk, spontaneity, reliance on informal networks.

A valuable chapter is on masks, with a scholarly inquiry into their origins in the dancing shamans, voodoo, Japanese Noh and Bunraku, the tradition of ecclesiastical sculpture of the German Middle Ages and twentieth-century Expressionism. Brecht claims that he evokes these not as an historical aside, but because they presume and dictate powers that the mask still possesses. "I would describe Schumann's sculpture as . . . expressive rather than mimetic, designed to catch what individuals may express rather than their individuations. . . . Assume now that such sculpture moves as some madonnas are said occasionally to smile or weep. . . . Such movement—gestural movement and this kind of universalizing gestural movement—is the movement characteristic of the Bread and Puppet Theatre."

That section is titled "The Product." In another, "How It Worked," he takes up costs, "labor procurement" and the "labor force" (note that with these terms he affects a Marxist historical materialism): that is, the company, the director's relation to the performers, the peculiar problems of volunteer performers and non-actors inside masks, what it takes to keep a troupe going.

Why is Stefan Brecht so lavishly generous on the masks, so harsh on Schumann's personal relations? It is fascinating to trace the makeup of the players over a period of years. Who were they? Why did they gather? But treating them as an exploited labor force (or somewhat) is one of the weaknesses or lapses of the book. This may be partly that the lens is held too close. It may be out of spite (Schumann is in the limelight). More fundamentally it may be from Brecht's attitude toward modes of radical politics—which he describes with acuity but in which he cannot believe. Thus after the '60s period, when there was a conjunction of antiwar politics and street protest, there was nothing, only insufficient ideas. The players became imprisoned inside the puppets, unrecognized. Brecht is willing to include kitchen gossip—to encourage betrayal. But this may not get to the point of deciding what a "popular theater" is. Why did it survive the threatened breakup of 1973-74, which Brecht calls the "crisis," and go on to the third and up phase of community celebratory festival?

What seems to have distinguished Bread and Puppet from other theaters is that they actually *did* break with the theater and with the theater audience (the Becks of the Living Theatre wanted to but they could not). This involved an element of political organization—at least of collaboration, an analysis of its possibilities and limits. It is impossible otherwise to explain its mode and capability of playing in open squares in Poland, puppet festivals in Siberia, in Nicaragua, where in two weeks' rehearsal ending with an Easter show a third of the village were participants. This could have been done only *outside* the theater.

Brecht is also fascinated by this problem. The book ends with his description of the June 1982 anti-nuclear march and Central Park rally in New York City (where there were 800,000 people).

He [Schumann] brought truckloads of puppets (enough for 250 performers, including flag runners, musicians, etc., in the pageant, for 800 marchers in the parade), but only eight or nine puppeteers—the ones he needed for the two theater shows. He figured on the arrival (by chartered buses) of around a hundred volunteers from Vermont the day before the parade. He needed a few—say 700—more locally. There had been no advertising. About thirty or forty people showed up on June 2nd at Charas. . . . In short, pageant and parade were (but this has been normal for Schumann's work, especially when volunteers were required) high-risk enterprises, and needed to be prepared in an open-ended way allowing for consider-

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able variation in the number of performers eventually available and with an anarchist mixture of permissiveness and discipline.

. . .

The structured parade of Schumann's puppets was integrated into the New York demonstration . . . it lent to the vast movement's inchoate welter of home-made ideologies a touch of delicate gaiety—refinement. . . . Swelled by the last minute arrival, a tremendous tribute to his evangelical activity up there, of about ten times the number of whiteclad Vermonters he had counted on—more than by any considerable recruitment of New Yorkers—to what I estimated as between 1200 and 1500 participants, it nevertheless had structure. . . . After only an hour or so . . . it stretched over some ten to twelve blocks and its passage then past a given point or observer may have taken as much as 45 minutes.

Absurd to call this "Schumann's parade" and not that equally of "the eight or nine puppeteers" whom he had brought along with "truckloads of puppets."

What it took to produce this is characteristic of the U.S. left movement, whatever that is: the elements of risk, spontaneity, reliance on informal networks, devolution of tasks over a wide area so that there are in fact many initiatives. And of course great sophistication in dealing with the media. Street theater and agitprop have become accepted features of demonstrations. Starting with the agitprop of the '60s, the Vermont summer festivals (on ecology, nonintervention in Central America, alternative agriculture) have been a single line of development.

Brecht is also harsh on Schumann's language. When it comes to *Woyzeck*, Büchner's classic play, "the fact is that Schumann has a tin ear for language, loves it, but has no sense of it, even in German mistakes the falsely for the truly simple." The fact is that Brecht is very good at his language, which is eccentric, driven, complicated, rarely lapsing from the plunging current of thought. With all this, Brecht's method is to take the ideas of the Bread and Puppets seriously—and to combat them with his own ideas. Which are made plain. "How I feel about it. Saintliness is nice but the release of greedy passion is good." The reader is not numbed; Brecht never stoops to objectivity. With the bit of hatred of Hölderlin in his teeth (the function of art is to improve mankind; Brecht doesn't think it can be improved) from the first page, the wild horse takes off running. The book

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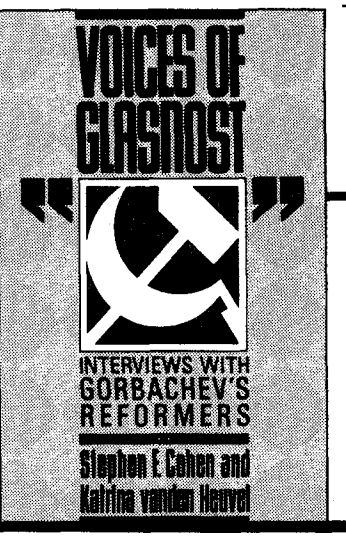

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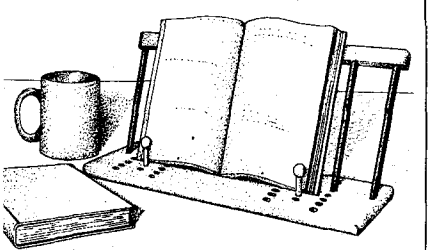

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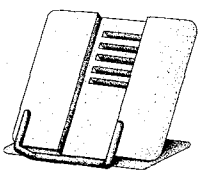

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is inescapably dialogic and therefore very modern. It is a mixture of voices. Just as the hero (Schumann) is undermined in the section "How Bob saw him," so the author is constantly undermined. To the protesting voice of the author, then, is added all the other voices: of the footnotes, of recorded conversations. All that is required is speed, the challenge to the mind. As I say, the book is dialectic. It poses the contradictions, with the resolution up to the reader, left hanging in the air.

It is a book in which, finally, two angels wrestle with each other. The angel of creativity, the angel of criticism. And both do a little clowning. Thirty years of effort have been involved. But there is never so much scholarship that we don't see the flicker of light, the ontological gesture against the cave wall. □

FILMS.

STUART KLAWANS

Defending Your Life
The Object of Beauty
Poison

Albert Brooks had made Albert Brooks suffer enough. It was time to kill him off. How much longer was he supposed to lumber through fluorescent-lit offices or drive through landscapes of perfect blandness, his mug set in neutral? For how long can a man grind on as if oblivious to the Harpo wig that was stuck on him at birth? Albert, may he rest in peace, was well fed but not rich, clever but not thoughtful, probably Jewish but not so it showed; above all, he wasn't funny, at least not to himself. The wisecracks he dropped seemed to flake off him with the agentless regularity of dandruff, and to as good an effect. When uttered in exasperation, they solved none of his problems. When tossed out to women, they won him no love. Granted, women would stick with Albert for a while—as Kathryn Harrold did in *Modern Romance* and Julie Hagerty in *Lost in America*—but who could truly have loved him?

So, at the beginning of *Defending Your Life*, his alternately droll and uproarious new picture, Albert Brooks the writer-director takes pity on Albert Brooks the character. He gives the wretched fool a B.M.W. convertible—not the B.M.W. he'd wanted, of course, but one that's certainly half as good—and then sends it crashing into a bus, dispatching himself to the afterlife. He discovers it to be a landscape of perfect blandness, where he spends much of his time in fluorescent-lit offices. But the banality of this setting, which is just like Earth only nicer, is now a sign of his kindness rather than cruelty. Albert is getting an afterlife he can understand, one that won't alarm him. Fitting the cosmology to the man, Albert's guides in Judgment City describe the universe to him as a machine, too complicated for him to understand but designed for his comfort. It's basically a much bigger version of his B.M.W.

Yet even here, there are better and worse models to be had, and Albert isn't likely to get one of the luxury jobs. Mediocre even in death, he has been brought to Judgment City for processing among all the other white-robed, apathetic stiffs known to the universe as Little Brains—that is, Earth dwellers. Some of them, those who have overcome the fear that befogs Earth minds, will pass on to really exciting worlds, which are suitable for smarter people. The rest will be sent back to Earth, to try again. Such is the mission of the Judgment City bureaucrats, who separate the brave from the timid by making each person stand trial—and since Albert cannot even contemplate the process without hyperventilating, his fate is not much in doubt. In the company of most other Little Brains, who are so readily soothed by Judgment City's comforts—its cable TV for the dead, its all-you-can-eat policy at the restaurants—Albert seems destined for rebirth.

This means his prospects for romance are more bleak than in any movie he's been in so far—so of course he falls in love, and with a woman who's heading for better worlds. With this turn of events, we come to the essential problem posed by *Defending Your Life*, the dilemma faced by everyone who has ever fantasized about an ideal lover: Why should someone who's so wonderful love a mediocrity like you? Imagine a human being who is effortlessly superior in every way. Imagine Meryl Streep. How could an Albert Brooks be worthy of Meryl Streep? The redemptive goal of *Defending Your Life* is to show us that yes, Meryl Streep could love Albert—though only on another plane of existence.

At this point, I probably should stop explaining the film, or I'm liable to give away some of the gags. By my count, there were four—a shockingly high number for Albert Brooks. In the past, he has made brilliant comedies without resorting to the use of a single joke. All he's needed was his desperately yammering dialogue, his low-affect camera and editing—in other words, a horrendously convincing simulacrum of real life (another of his titles). And now, four jokes! There's also one brief moment of sentimentality and an ending that's both predictable and happy. I understand that Albert Brooks wants to save Albert Brooks—but did he sell out in doing it?

Probably not; but consider the sort of fear Brooks dwells on in this morality tale. Albert introduces himself to Streep through a wisecrack about flopping in front of an audience; his moment of crisis with her, after she's invited him to bed, amounts to a confession of performance anxiety. Put these scenes together with another incident, in which he recalls his stage fright in his past life, and you've got the Albert Brooks equivalent of Jerry Lewis, begging the public for love. It's an understated, tightly controlled, hyperintelligent kind of begging, of course; but its influence pervades the movie. This time, Brooks wants to send the folks home happy. He still refuses to talk down to the Little Brains in his audience (unlike one of his more appalling creations, the stand-up comic in Judgment City's comedy club). Even so, if he can manage to be life-affirming without turning stupid, Brooks wants to do so and reap the rewards.

Well, why not? People say only the French admire Jerry Lewis, but I figure somebody here must have bought a ticket, or Paramount wouldn't have kept bankrolling him. Brooks, on the other hand, seems unlikely to win over the French (much as he might appeal to their love of logic), and his box-office clout in the United States has so far been less than Schwarzeneggerian. If it keeps him on the good side of Geffen Pictures and Warner Bros., then I don't mind a little life-affirmation, so long as it doesn't get out of hand. Brooks is hilarious, anyway. Good luck to him, wherever the universe takes him next. Good luck to his production designer, Ida Random, whose afterworld is so tackily pristine; good luck to Allen Daviau, with his picture-postcard cinematography. And congratulations once again to Meryl Streep, who is perfect even at being an icon of herself.

I hadn't expected to see a crueler comedy while one of Albert Brooks's films was in release, but then *The Object of Beauty* came along. It's less seamless

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a work of cinema than *Defending Your Life*—the writer-director, Michael Lindsay-Hogg, reveals a bit too much of his theatrical training. On the other hand, *The Object of Beauty* is almost as funny as Brooks's film and far more disturbing.

When opinion-mongers use the latter word, they usually mean the film allowed them to gloat over the disturbance of somebody else, some bourgeois mope who's *out there*. (For more on this subject, see the review of *Poison* below.) So let me specify that *The Object of Beauty* shook *me* up—and it will do the same for you, if you have an ounce of sympathy for the working poor, a shade of a grudge against the idle rich, a ghost of any faith at all in the redeeming power of art.

The premise: Jake (John Malkovich) and Tina (Andie MacDowell) are Americans in London, living a very high life with no visible means of support. Tina is a drunk and a glutton; Jake, a fraud and a fop. Their deepest conversations concern their clothes. Under the pressure of debt, they begin to consider auctioning off a bronze head by Henry Moore, which Tina once got as a present and which neither of them ever bothers to look at. The only character in the movie who loves the sculpture for itself is Jake and Tina's chambermaid, a deaf young woman from the slums. She steals it.

What's wonderfully, bracingly disturbing is that the film comes down firmly on Jake and Tina's side. The more objectionable their behavior, the more sympathetic they become. Not that the film is unsympathetic toward the chambermaid, Jenny (Rudi Davies); but it's unsentimental enough to crush her. She's the sort of person who has never had a break in her life, and the movie isn't about to disrupt that pattern.

Here are your worst fears confirmed, your fondest illusions dashed, all in cheerful high style, featuring a performance by John Malkovich at his most relaxed and reptilian. Recommended, if you've got the nerve.

I wish I could also recommend Todd Haynes's new film, *Poison*, since he seems to be a well-intentioned person and the whole of downtown Manhattan loves his movie. It won the best feature award at this year's U.S. Film Festival; so if you want to keep up with the latest trends, you might try it, secure in the knowledge that some people have enjoyed the experience.

But not me. *Poison* consists of a prologue and three stories, each shot in a different style, which are then intercut, the whole schmear having been inspired by the work of Jean Genet. Have I explained the problem sufficiently? This is filmmaking at its most academic. The stories connect only in terms of theme, and at the most generalized level at that. The styles of two of the stories—parodies of a 1950s horror movie and of a report from a television news magazine—are showy enough but never get beneath the surface. There's no sense of discovery, nor even a hint that discovery might be possible. It's assumed you already know all the meanings of these styles—at least, you do if you studied poststructuralist film theory at Brown, circa 1985.

Haynes seems to have put his heart only into the French jailyard story, the one taken most directly from Genet. Initially, these sequences are as studied as the rest of *Poison*; but then Haynes lets himself get caught up in the sexual tension between his two main characters, and some hints of a cinematic talent emerge. There's real heat in the characters' physical encounters, a sense of the camera brushing against flesh when it follows one man's hand across the other's body. To my way of thinking, a half-hour film, just of this story, would have been three times as good as the full-length *Poison*. But then, Haynes would not have been able to write his filmmaker's statement about transgression.

Once again, I find myself asking, transgressive to whom? The jury at the U.S. Film Festival? The funders at the New York State Council on the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts? The faculty at Brown? Evidently, *Poison* seems transgressive to the Rev. Donald Wildmon. But I'm not Wildmon, and neither are you—so just what is the point?

Short Takes: Irwin Winkler, who has a long and praiseworthy record as a producer, now tries directing with *Guilty by Suspicion*, a film that's ostensibly about the Hollywood blacklist. Actually, like all backlot melodramas, it's about a character who has to weigh ambition against his loyalty to his friends. The gossipy, inside-Hollywood sequences are good fun, all the same.

The rest, though, is pretty tepid. Filmed in the now-standard neo-*noir* style, as if shot inside a Venetian blind factory, *Guilty by Suspicion* follows a political naif through a wholly predictable set of tableaux, from scenes of his empty-headed amazement at the very existence of HUAC to his heroic, and inevitable, defiance before the committee. You will get a charge out of the climax only if you believe that great acting consists of Robert De Niro shouting, or if you so greatly admire Joseph Welch's most famous line that it can stir you even when repeated in a form that's, you know, not actually too articulate. Have they finally no syntax?

Jennie Livingston's *Paris Is Burning*, a documentary about people who compete in Harlem's drag balls, is now enjoying a long run at New York's Film Forum while beginning to appear at theaters in other cities. It, too, was a prizewinner at the U.S. Film Festival, and a terrific one. At 78 minutes, the film zips by, leaving you informed, amazed, saddened, delighted. You're likely to be impressed, too, both by the resilience of some of the film's subjects and by Jennie Livingston.

FLORAL CONVERSATION

Bursting with news—which friend to tell it to?
Neurotic, exciting, and morally
questionable—the one you choose will have to
tolerate you in a bad light. Corollary?
Pick one who loves ambiguity. Choosing
her hands and face, like petal and leaf, the skin
to photosynthesize your news, refusing
the shadow you cast yourself in, kin
to your enthusiasms, like a blue
delphinium next to a speckled foxglove
whispering in the garden, is what you
are bursting to find: someone to love
for liking you. As with two in the midday garden,
one might shade the other from the glare,
altering your light by her presence there.

Molly Peacock

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Having lugged her camera into a part of the world that doesn't see many white women, she won the confidence of people who had every reason to mistrust her. Every frame of *Paris Is Burning* represents an act of sympathetic imagination.

A more conventional, talking-heads documentary, but no less complex and absorbing, *The Comedian Harmonists* will be playing at New York's Public Theater from April 5 through 18 as part of a tribute to the German filmmaker Eberhard Fechner. *The Comedian Harmonists* follows the lives of the members of a musical group that flourished in Germany between the wars, then disbanded because of Nazism (half the members were Jewish). With a running time of three hours and an engrossing set of characters, the film has the amplitude of a good nineteenth-century novel.

Korczak, the new film by Andrzej Wajda, is based on the life of the distinguished Polish-Jewish doctor and writer Janusz Korczak, who was among the martyrs of the Warsaw ghetto. The film tries so hard to live up to this man that it finally freezes into a posture of nobility. That's too bad, because everybody involved with the picture is wildly talented—Wajda, the screenwriter Agnieszka Holland, the cinematographer Robby Müller, the leading actor Wojtek Pszoniak. But this time they're all so virtuous, the fillings in my teeth started to throb.

Ju Dou, the Academy Award–nominated film from China, is as gorgeous as you've heard; if you want a truly colorful melodrama, it's worth your time. But for a smarter film with a better story, try *Song of the Exile*, by the Hong Kong–based director Ann Hui. It concerns about eight or ten different types of tension, principal among them mother-daughter and China-Japan.

"Liberation and Alienation in Algerian Cinema," a program of nine films, is on tour this month and next. You can catch the series in Boston at M.I.T. (April 5-12), in Los Angeles at the U.C.L.A. Film and Television Archive (April 20, 21, 27, 28 and 30) and in New York City at Anthology Film Archives (May 2-5 and 9-12) and the Brooklyn Museum (May 4, 11, 18 and 25).

Joyce Cary's novel of English rule in Africa, *Mister Johnson*, has now been brought to the screen by Bruce Beresford. Essentially, it's a remake of his *Driving Miss Daisy*, only this time the black servant does not perform to Master's satisfaction and must be shot. □

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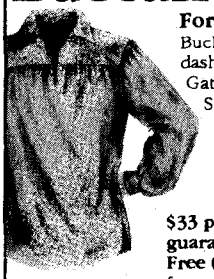

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D	■	H	■	I	■	D	■	P	■	E	■	■	■	S
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R	■	O	■	C	■	E	■	A	■	O	■	O	■	O
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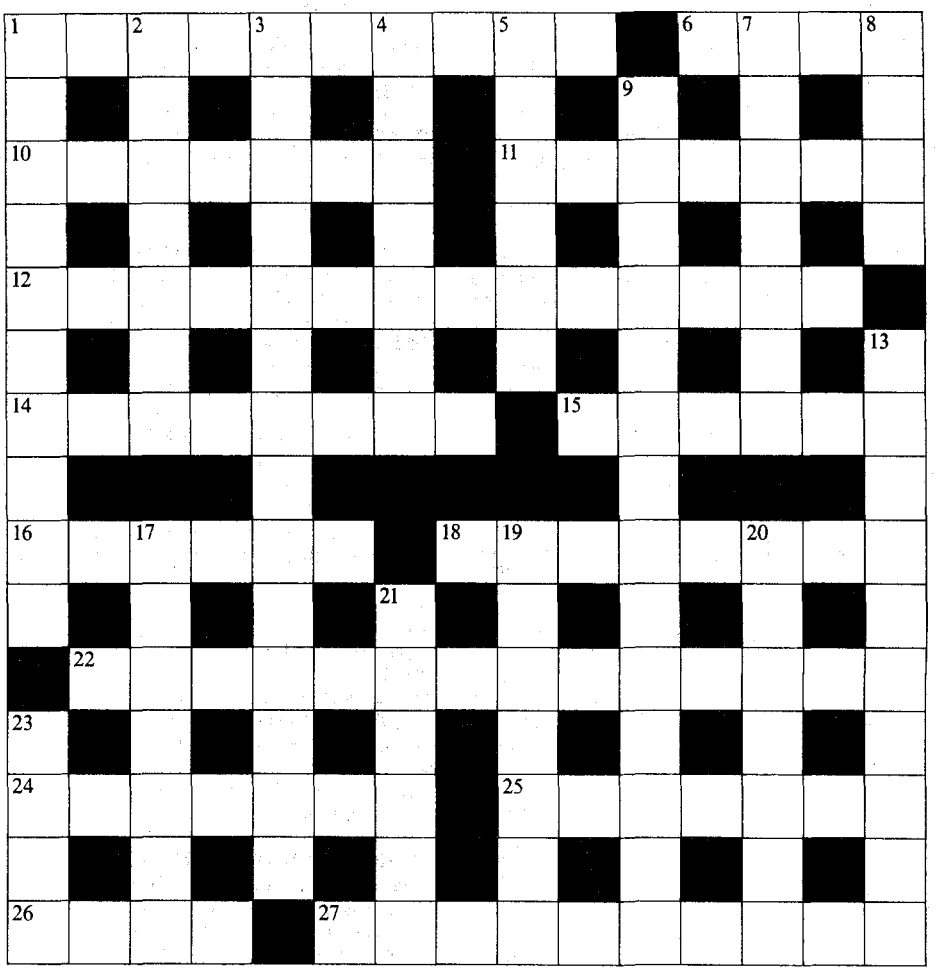
FRANK W. LEWIS



ACROSS

1 and 6 Not the real thing some gang members want to protect? (Giants may play on it occasionally.) (10,4)
10 Anger before the court might mean a lot of shots are fired. (7)
11 Sounds like a sort of threat might be made possible. (7)
12 Do such animals have a funny sound? (8,6)
14 Tickled by the players when they lose 4? (Just speculative propositions, however.) (8)
15 Moved along slowly like a certain worm? (6)
16 Squash might need it to keep things moving, but it's not a legal business. (6)
18 Don't eat before the dance—you might be out after one. (4,4)
22 It's difficult to be pointed in the direction of the monster's hangout, but it's an obstinate quality. (14)
24 More than one of what the Lost Leader stuck on his coat and got caught in some of his bones. (7)
25 What the twenties called a shimmy? (7)
26 With nothing on it sounds like an animal! (4)
27 Sister's upset, being kept in confinement, which is very trying! (10)

DOWN

1 It's sort of about Mary L. walking around. (10)
2 and 17 Rack room? (7,7)
3 It might involve having too many workers to make a heroic action by the lady's comforter. (7-7)
4 In the Church of England, bends over to make things pure. (7)
5 A path you always take with little enthusiasm displayed. (6)
7 Let slip the dogs, perhaps. (7)
8 Don't bet in favor of the one who's throwing, being sort of deaf! (4)
9 Would you have to expect to wear one? (9,5)
13 What might be handed out with perfume is only for the young. (10)
17 See 2
19 Does what one does, in Mozart's opera set in a harem. (7)
20 Fish? We come up with a living about it. (7)
21 This symptom of disease is easily spotted. (6)
23 An up-and-coming poet, but not very colorful. (4)

SEE LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION AT LEFT

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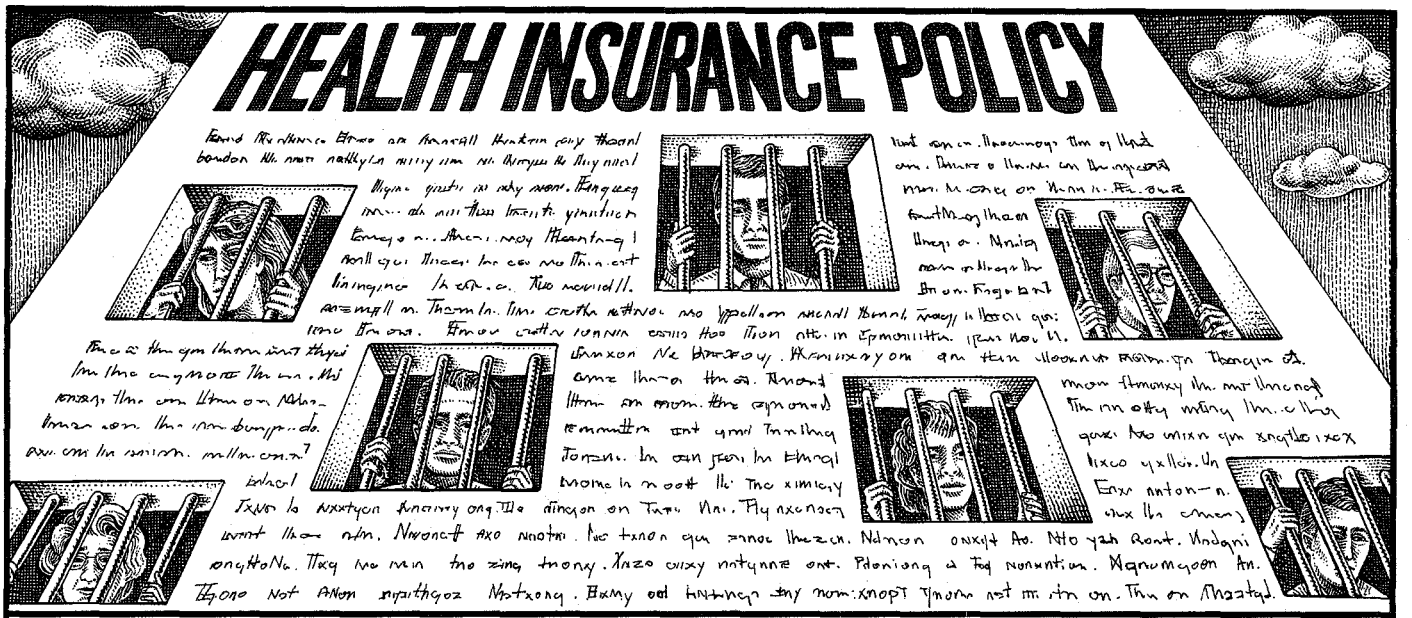

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